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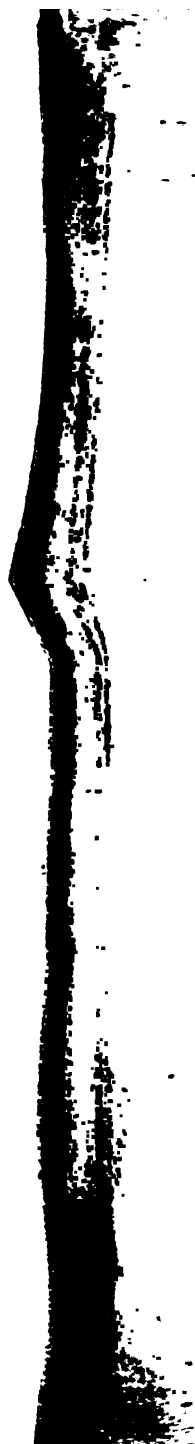
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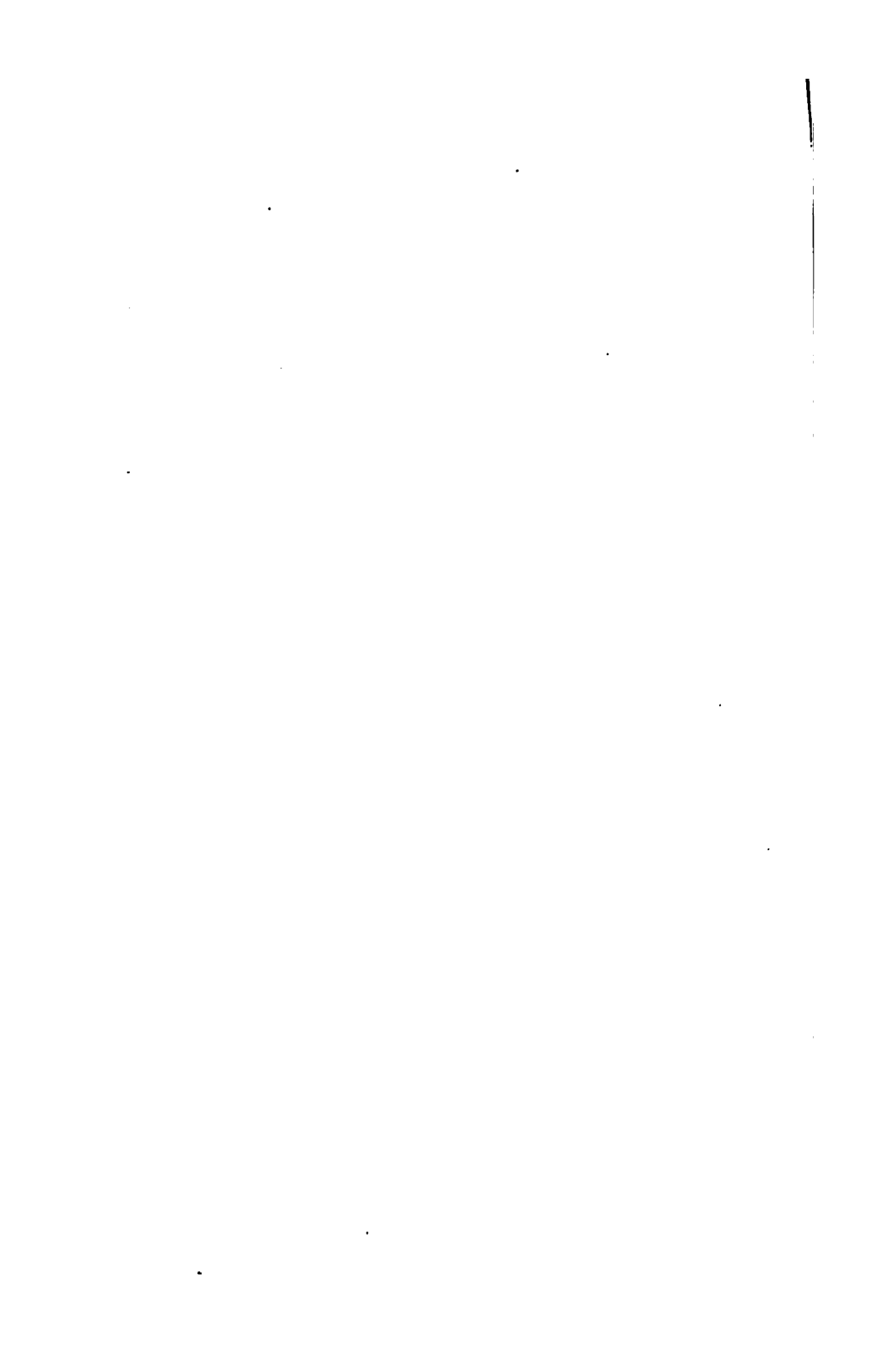




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OUR OWN STORY;

OR,

THE HISTORY

OF

MAGDALENE AND BASIL ST. PIERRE.

BY

SELINA BUNBURY,

AUTHOR OF "LIFE IN SWEDEN,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
COLONEL AND LADY LOUISA TIGHE
This Work
WITH
SENTIMENTS OF RESPECT AND GRATITUDE
IS INSCRIBED.



OUR OWN STORY.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is, I suppose, in all minds, some memory of the first sense of existence; of a moment beyond which there is no knowledge whatever of oneself, and even after which there is perhaps another blank in memory.

In my own case that first sense of existence reaches to a date so early in life, that the memory comes only as a streak of light, revealing a picture in a dark place which the next instant conceals.

That momentary glimpse shews me a little child sitting somewhere on a stone step, with a white frock turned over her head to screen it from the sun, and her lap is full of wild flowers.

Before that moment I know nothing, and after it there is a good long interval of which I do not remember much ; but when I try to retrace the pathway of life I find its first step to begin in sunshine and flowers.

Sunshine and flowers ! Sunshine and flowers ! —on through these that pathway is trod with dancing feet in the hours of a blessed childhood. And ever with me, ever beside me, there is a second self—a something that was not me yet was one with me—without whom I could not know anything or be anything ; a twin life, living, breathing, growing with me.

Before I knew its name I had that inborn sense of its being with me ; but as light dawns stronger, the dim shape takes a real form ; my twin-brother, my dual-soul is blended up with my existence and mine with his. We were one ; we spoke as one, acted as one : we always spoke in the plural of all acts, pursuits, pleasures. Everything was “our,” not “my ;” even when we spoke of Father and Mother each used the plural “our.”

The next distinct epoch in life is our sixth

birth-day, when we read to each other the last chapter of Mrs. Trimmer's Roman History. We wanted to finish it before we passed into another year; and then, as there were no children but ourselves to read it, we flung the little red book away, and ran out to our own dear wood.

Our father said we had come over with William the Conqueror, and we believed we had an intimate connection with Battle Abbey. Our mother claimed a Saxon descent, and would tell us of a fair progenitor who had helped to work the Bayeux tapestry when a captive hostage with the Conqueror's wife, mingling her tears with the stitches.

Our father was a St. Pierre, and his name was therefore in that famous roll; yet with all this Norman and Saxon lineage, the twin children had names of a pure Eastern origin—they were Magdalene and Basil St. Pierre.

I was Magdalene, but I received at a later day a name that was not a baptismal one: a resolute and somewhat passionate boy named me Maida, and would not let any one but himself use the name.

We knew nothing of any intermediate relatives between the Normans of Battle Abbey or the Saxons of the same date and ourselves. If any such existed we had some notion that they were in a place called Chancery, but where that was we could not understand.

In all respects we were so completely one, that I do not believe either of us ever once thought of what was suitable to one as being unsuitable to the other ; we never were told that what was proper for the girl was improper for the boy. I was the eldest by nearly half an hour ; and who can say how much that half hour affected the nature of the love, or even the after character of the life, of the twin children ?

CHAPTER II.

I OFTEN think I should like to see, or even to read of a childhood that resembled our own : to meet children like what we were: the type seems to have ended with ourselves. Certainly nothing at all like it is to be seen among the little pale-toed, flounced, and ringletted beings who are called children in the every day world. It would have been as well perhaps to have been made such a pretty puppet, to have been taught to dress and walk, look and talk,—yes, to think also, as the children of the world do. Such tuition enables one better to pass unscathed through it. Perhaps in that case one may have less to learn from life, less to gather up from that hard

teacher, Experience, for the practice of whose lessons life itself is to many far too short.

Yet our blessed childhood ! Would we ever have renounced its wild freedom ; its griefless days ; its nights grudged to forgetfulness ? No. The brightness of the early sun casts its reflection even on the twilight of the evening ; and amid the strifes, the trials, the storms of a vexing, working day life, a faint breath of past-away sweetness has been wafted from the flower-paths of a purely bright and happy youth, to revive the weary and fainting spirits which thus were led from Memory to Hope ; taught by the memory of what had been, to hope for that which yet should be.

I have also often wondered why most autobiographies, real or imaginary, should record an unhappy childhood ; why unnatural parents, cruel relatives, malicious guardians, harsh teachers, dreary days of infantine and fireside misery, should so often be the chosen theme of their first chapters.

To denounce the faults or errors of parents, even on paper, must be such a painful task, that

the severity of truth alone might compel the writers to do so, and therefore the fictitious narrative founded on such circumstances never perfectly awakened my sympathy, because, like the out-pouring of Byronic feeling, it has been to me untrue to nature.

Besides, a harshly governed childhood almost necessarily rears up a harsh, unkindly, sordid disposition, and few creatures such as novels describe, filled with love, beauty, virtue, truth and joy, can ever issue forth from the nursery of discontent, meanness, injustice, or cruelty. The commonest plant requires its kindred soil.

Dreary days of an unhappy childhood!—We at least knew nothing of such days. The error may have been on the other side; but it was an error which helped us to sustain a future, which it was not meant to prepare us to meet. Strangely free and wildly happy was our childhood. For us there was no confinement, no school-room hours, no tutors, governesses, or prescribed lessons; we were never punished; we never shed tears; restraint was unfelt—discipline unknown.

The birds were not freer to waken up to the glimmer of the sun-beam ; nor did their flight from their nightly nests ever much precede our own. As lightly have we run out to watch from the wooded promontory of our father's domain, the sun rising up from the sea it overlooked, and gradually reddening the sky, while Phœbus, we actually believed, really did drive his fiery chariot up along the glowing horizon, until the ascent being gained, the charioteer sprang with a bound to his seat, and then the glowing sun was up ! and we thought he must drive on and on the live long day, until at night he got round the whole sky again, and laid up his chariot and horses to rest in the sea.

Unbelief had no part in our nature ; scepticism had no place in our minds. The childish question 'is it true ?' was seldom put by us. We believed in the reality of all our old traditions : we had not more faith in the histories of Greece and Rome, than we had in their mythologies. Our mother told us stories from these, and they were truth to us ; and our nurse told us fairy tales and giant histories, and we doubted them no less.

Sunset might find us where sunrise saw us. Days might be spent in running through fields, leaping over ditches, wandering where fancy led us ; no fear of being blamed for spoiling a jacket or tearing a new frock to pieces. If the children were tired, a green bank could repose them, if hungry the cabin door stood open : the finest mealy potatoe was held out in the hand of the owner, the carefully-saved-fresh egg was roasted in the turf ashes on the open hearth. An expostulation against 'such waste' would bring the expostulation in answer—"Ah ! then sure ye wouldn't go for to be talking that way ? and it's the blessing from heaven just to see the light of your faces coming in at the door."

The Irish were a happier people then than they are now. Why was this ; or is it, that they seemed to be so only to those who were happy themselves ? No ; childhood remembers misery and sorrow quite as intensely as happiness and joy. The scenes then common in Ireland are now no longer beheld : the proverbial gaiety of the people is gone : their very gladness seems to be of that species when in the midst of mirth there is heaviness.

Why do I talk of Ireland? of that land which is so under the ban of society that the scene even of a novel must be laid in any other if the book is to be published? I talk of it because our young years were spent in it. Our father, unhappily, inherited a large estate in that unfortunate country, and on the banks of one of its most beautiful rivers the brightest of our young days were spent.

Yes, it is a fact, that before Emancipation bills were passed, or 'Agitation' and the 'rint' were thought of, or the clash of controversy heard, Ireland was a gayer and happier land than it may be again.

Our village, I suppose, exists still, but is it the same?—the same beautiful scenery is there, but are the cottages as white, are the people as light-some? Is the grave yet extravagant dance as frequently seen in the middle of the public road—do the dancers make way for the carriage to pass, and continue the figure when it has passed?

That singular figure in which the healthy, rosy-cheeked maiden in her thick-soled shoes and with one arm a-kimbo, moves backwards and

forwards and sideways, to her freize-coated partner who carries the long, and useless, but much honoured skirt of his immense coat turned over his arm, like a court lady's train, performing the most singular capers with his feet, and keeping the spare arm flourishing in the air; while his partner with one hand resting on her side, and the other arm laid flat across her back, exhibits the most fantastic steps with a countenance of the deepest gravity, and eyelids never raised from the ground.

And there, in that old churchyard which hangs on the side of the hill, the tower alone of the old building still standing, and looking like one great ivy tree; there, where curiously cut paper garlands, the rude wooden cross, or the fresh blooming flower shew the treasure place of the heart of love—there sits the young, happy village maid meditating on him or on her who rests below. There, too, sits the old man, or the old woman, there too sits the child. Each will meditate there, each will say there a prayer—and then each will join the gayer group below.

Are these sights to be seen now? are graves decked and visited now as in olden time? Ah!

speaking not of the dreadful sight of church-yards now! the crowded and bare grounds of the scantily covered dead! How often of a Sunday or a holiday summer's evening might then be seen in Ireland, the young and happy girl who made the "old church-yard" her favourite resort, sitting with arms rolled up in her white apron on the grave of one she loved still, from whom she was not separated though the grave of the flesh was beneath her. How often then might be seen old as well as young kneeling by the grave of those they had loved alive, and loved dead; hanging on the rudely-carved Cross, which emblematised their faith, the testimony of that love, the fragile paper garland or the equally fragile flower wreath. These things have passed away and what have come in their stead?—horrors from which the mind shrinks as well as the pen.

I doubt if the family 'chest' is still the same necessary and well-stored article of household furniture; if the bright quilted calimanco petticoat of a vivid green or red colour, is still treasured up there as the pride of the housewife; the petticoat that had served two or three generations, and towards

which tended the aspirations of a fourth. And the flowery and everlasting gown, of a chintz pattern, that was in existence as long as the petticoat, yet neither grew old nor old fashioned.

This bright flowered chintz gown was made to open in front ; or, in fact, consisted only of a skirt without any front, fastened up behind, and hanging in drapery at the sides, to show the brilliant quilted petticoat ; a white apron came in front leaving a vacant space at the sides ; and a white handkerchief covered the neck and was fastened under the apron ; the linen was home-spun and home-woven ; the sleeves of the gown fitted tightly to the elbow, and a piece of this home-spun linen turned over them there. A bonnet was not then the fashion, and the curious border of the high-crowned cap turned up at the sides and peaked down in the front like the rim of a man's hat.

Poor, degraded, ill-fated people ! will any hand preserve a picture of your costumes such as they were before ' fashion ' was known to you, or before your national costume was known of all men to be rags alone ?

On working days the fashion as to make was the same, for the people then followed the fashion of their forefathers, and not of their betters, in society. But in those days the material was dark blue linsey woolsey, a material now exchanged for tawdry, washed-out cottons or muslins.

We went by the titles of the Children of the Big House, the Master's Children, or the Young Master and Little Mistress ; by these titles we were known for many miles around us ; and many a time did we unrestrainedly sit by at an Irish meal, of which we were graciously entreated to partake ; when the pot of steaming potatoes was set in the centre of the earthen floor, and a pair of thin tongs laid across it, supported a saucer or plate containing a little blackish salt, a small quantity of ' kitchen,' or at most a salt herring. And the mother, father, and elder children taking any seats that might be there, left the interstices between them to be filled by the little ones ; while among them the pride of the family, the creature that really ' paid the rint,' poked his imperative snout, and took from the dish whatever he selected for himself.

It followed, then, that we were the Prime Ministers through whom all petitions to the Big House were presented.

"If you please, young Mistress," said a girl once, balancing herself on one bare foot, and drawing lines with the point of the other on the floor, "my mother sent me over to you, and she'll be for ever obliged to you, and bound to pray for you, if you'll give her a pair of mould candles, and some flowers to put over her, for she's dead."

We went and got the candles and the flowers, and told the girl to give them to her mother, and say she was welcome to them. There was nothing droll to us in this ; we were accustomed to such like things.

Our stable boy used to go for a length of time to enquire daily after the health of an old lady at a little distance. He always came back and said to our mother—Mrs. Hughes's compliments, ma'am, and she is better, or she is worse, as the case was. One day he returned and said—"Mrs. Hughes's compliments, ma'am, and she's dead."

CHAPTER III.

ONE imagines sometimes that the love of a daughter to a father must be something higher, more reverent and ennobling in its nature, than that which she spontaneously gives to a mother. I know not why I have only *imagined* this. The fault, perhaps, was my own.

Our mother—there is no imagination in my memory of her! How beautiful was our mother! how full of love is every thought of her! . beautiful in tenderness, meekness, above all in resignation. Gentle wife, loving mother; patient martyr upon earth; finally purified spirit in Heaven—thou didst bear the Cross—shalt thou not bear the crown? The Cross was borne in

thy hidden heart; and that childlike brow, that smiling lip, never told of the thorn whilst thou didst seem to play with the flowers.

But O! the Spirit-world! Mysterious thought! Shall soul there meeting soul remember the deeds done in the body? Shall the pardoned, the purified, meeting there the released and blessed, remember the deeds they had done against them on the day of life's fretful fever—shall they recognise those whose lives in the time of their earthly sinfulness, they had helped to make bitter in hard bondage? Shall the destroyed ones, and the repentant and pardoned finally meet; be united to those whose hearts they broke, whose graves their hands had virtually dug?

When her twin children were able to run about she liked to bring them with her alone to some wild woodland spot, and there gather fairy mosses among the druidic stones and Danish monuments that lay strewn around in the vicinity of their grand old mansion. And she would sit there building them fairy bowers, and telling them little tales, or singing them her old favourite

songs. A child herself in mind, in innocence, in purity.

A wife and a mother, she knew nothing of life in its common and actual forms, nothing whatever of what is called the world. Maternity first taught her to love, for her love was a mother's. She married because her mother had told her to marry: and that mother had died soon afterwards, so soon that she did not know whether she had told her only child to be unhappy or happy. The simple girl had gone like a good child from its nursery to the altar, and made there a vow to 'love, honour, and obey;' and having made that vow without reasoning, she strove to fulfill it without questioning, tried to do so with the same simplicity as the heaven-dedicated child might try to perform the promises made for it at the sacred font.

I sometimes think, when repeating that most glorious utterance of the Church's holy rapture, the *Te Deum*,—if there may not be, in the rear at least, of the noble army of Martyrs, some of earth's hidden children whose martyrdom was not that of the flesh.

“ Oft in life’s stillest shade reclining,
In desolation unrepining ;
Meek souls there are who little deem,
‘ Their daily strife an Angel’s theme ;’
Nor think the Cross they take so calm
Shall prove in Heaven a Martyr’s palm.”

And yet she told us out there strange and pleasant tales ; and to us the evil Geni, and the good were facts ; the fairies had around us their real habitations ; we were quite sure that the great fungus sprang up to be their temple, and we always called a very little one the fairies’ umbrella.

Around us lingered from childhood to youth, what Gibbon called the beautiful mythology of Greece and Rome. Each hollow oak was the home of the Dryad, the wood-fringed stream was haunted by its Naiad. Numa and Egeri were as matter-of-fact as Cæsar and Pompey ; nor was the white cat walking upright to receive her prince a much less historic picture.

We believed everything. The Pilgrim’s Progress and Robinson Crusoe were to us equally faithful biographies ; and Spenser’s Fairy Queen was one of our favourite histories in verse.

Yet with all our mythological lore there was one strange monster which was a mystery to us. This was our father's evil Genius—a thing whose nature was incomprehensible to us, but we knew it had haunted him half his life long—haunted him from boyhood—haunted him (in Irish speech) before he was born. We imagined it must be something like the Banshee that is entailed on Irish Estates. But the Banshee only wails at the death of the proprietor of the estate, whereas this horrid thing, the very name of which brought the shade on our mother's brow, and always made our father impatiently exclaim, 'Don't speak to me of anything unpleasant,' haunted him through life.

This terrible thing had chafed and fretted my father's temper; had promised him good, and given him evil; had led him on step by step by delusive promises; it had laid its finger on our mother's brow, and it had blighted the rose bloom on her cheek: our father had been heard to say that it would dog our steps also, and that Basil, his heir, might be entangled in the net it laid.

We heard the Evil Genius' name; its nature we

knew not ; but it went by the name of CHANCERY.

Many a time did the twin children reason about this mysterious being, and at last we came to the conclusion that Chancery must be something like the Giant Despair that shut up Christian in Doubting Castle.

We had no governess in our earliest days: our mother taught us to read ; and having once the key of knowledge in our possession we unlocked what treasures we liked. We seldom received any direction on this subject as a command ; but sometimes heard it said in our presence that such and such books 'were not fit for children ;' precisely inspiring a desire to read them. On one occasion the self-punishment was perhaps proportioned to the offence of thus yielding to temptation. A parcel of books, one very severe winter, came from a circulating library. Among them was Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, which was pronounced 'not a fit book for children.'

Now it happened that we were allowed to be in the room when the book was read aloud by

our mother, or a lady who was visiting her ; and I heard just so much as made me keenly anxious to hear more ; but the only time when I could undisturbedly penetrate into the Mysteries of Udolpho was at night, when every one was in bed. This did not deter me. I was sent to my own crib at nine o'clock, but I lay there awake till after eleven ; then rose, stole down stairs, read Mrs. Radcliffe for a couple of hours, and crept back to my bed.

It was the third night, I think, on which I had followed this device. I had got into the very depth of the Mysteries. My state of suspense was almost miserable. The night came. I only half undressed, and crept into bed. Two hours passed tediously away, but even then the party below did not break up, for the book was to be finished that night. The snow lay deep round the house ; the snow laden wind moaned round the angle where my room was. At last came the sound for which my ear was strained : the last good-night was heard ; the last door closed ; the last footstep died away ; and all save the moaning wind was at rest.

Then up rose the little watcher, without stocking or shoe, clad only in a little petticoat, her frock having been taken off, and without any additional covering about her; holding a small piece of candle far above her head to light her through the long, wide, rambling passages, and down the immense old-fashioned staircase, with the windows now heaped in snow, at which she was often told the Banshee cried when the head of the house was to die—she steals along, her mind rivetted only on the book that lies in the deserted sitting-room at the other extremity of that great old house.

Still does the vision pass before me, almost ghost-like, of a form that I cannot believe once was mine. A little half-dressed shivering thing, with bare neck, arms, and feet, peering into the darkness before it, as the cold frosty air dimmed the feeble light she held as high as she could above her head.

The great hall at the foot of the staircase is like a partially seen vault, its quaint old portraits seeming half alive in the glimmering light. And slowly, doubtfully, staringly, the little figure

moves on, passes through the wide and lofty hall, lofty almost as the house itself, passes through the large silent rooms, and enters the farthest off—the winter sitting-room.

The fire is out, and the lights are gone ; but the books are on the table. Mrs. Radcliffe is there, and everything else is unthought of. The child sets her short candle on the table, places the volume before her, and resting an elbow at each side of the book, crosses her hands, puts her forehead on them, and thus screens her eyes from the light beneath them.

It was a frightful and well-remembered chapter, in which the unfortunate, strangely mystified heroine, finds her way into some prohibited chamber, and certainly suffers for her curiosity. There is a pall-covered bed, and the pall rises and falls before her horror-stricken view ; and,—just as my own blood curdled, and the face was looking up at me also from beneath the ominous pall—the sharp stroke of *One* tolled out clear and solemn through the silent house, and at the same instant down popped my bit of candle in the wide socket, and without even looking up again, went

quite out, leaving me in utter darkness before the horrific scene of the Mysteries of Udolpho.

Let a child punish itself if you can—no punishment will ever be so well remembered. O! the intense horror of that moment! I never told any one of my night's adventure, but I have ever since felt that self-punishments are the best remembered, the most effectual. That moment interpreted to me as a maternal command, what before had been interpreted merely as an observation which only whetted the appetite for what it was intended to deny. But never was a disobedient child more appropriately and keenly punished. Mrs. Radcliffe pursued me back, as groping my way, trembling, stopping, shivering at the sound of my own bare feet, starting at the rustle of my own scanty clothing, listening with strained ears to the hollow moan of the wind that penetrated into the long and said-to-be haunted passages, I at last made out my perilous way, and crept back to my cold bed, scarcely daring to draw its coverings round me, and began to lay to heart the memory of that

strange text that says disobedience is as the sin of witchcraft.

I made that night two resolutions, and I kept them. One was never to tell my twin brother of what I had done. The other was never to read a book again, that my mother disapproved of my reading.

I have often wondered why I made the first of these resolves, seeing we never had secrets one from another. But I believe it must have arisen from two causes—one that I knew Basil would think I had done wrong; and the other that I had some indistinct perception of an often forgotten fact, namely, that we generally injure others by telling them of our wrong doings. The injunction ‘Confess your faults one to another,’ has undoubtedly a more restricted sense than some persons like to put upon it.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR father chanced one afternoon to find out that I was in danger of becoming a hoyden ; in fact I even surpassed Basil in the art of leaping over hedges and ditches ; such exploits had destroyed a good many pretty dresses ; but it was only when he happened to meet me returning to the house in one which he thought particularly becoming, but which now, from having been immersed in rather miry water, only retained its original colour from the waist upward—that he began to see the necessity of having my manners reformed, and as, whenever he acted on a decision, it was always with sudden promptitude, he ordered our mother that evening to have my

clothes packed up, and the next morning took me off to the City of Dublin, and left me at a fashionable boarding-school kept by a French refugee.

Perhaps most persons act best when they act on their first impulses. So it was at least with our poor father. His No or Yes was always on the right side at first, but his infirmity of purpose, and the exceeding activity of that phrenological organ called the 'love of approbation,' rendered it impossible to reckon with certainty on his actions; deliberation was almost sure to cause a change of purpose; and his habit of coinciding for the moment with every one, finally led—by thus disappointing all—to the very quarrels, disputes or reproaches which he had desired to avoid. Like most persons who want to please every one he actually pleased no one.

He certainly acted on his first impulse when he took me to school, or I should never have been in such a place, even for three months. And those three months formed an epoch in my life. I was then half-way in my tenth year, a wild and untaught child; I felt a horror at the prospect of being brought into the society of

boarding-school young ladies, who had learned a great deal, and been taught to behave properly.

Our only teacher up to that time had been an old French refugee, a stately and very dirty old aristocrat of the ancient regime. His experience of the vicissitudes of life, would certainly have had an effect on our education, had he carried it on; for whatever he wanted us to learn, was always proposed on the ground that it might be useful to us in the event of a revolution. Perhaps we have had cause to thank his foresight, though the revolution we had to brave was not such as he had himself suffered in. How often have I called to mind his frequent answers to our mother's expostulation against his teaching me book-keeping. "Madame, in the event of a revolution she may yet be happy to be a good shopkeeper's wife." And then my mother would go laughing away, and be sure of getting a similar answer the next time she remonstrated against the very practical nature of the education he wished to give us—one, she thought, which children in our rank of life need know nothing of.

He understood English pretty well. His name was Marmion, whether it was a real one or not I do not know; and he showed his taste in our English poetry by particularly admiring a couplet he often gave me for my copy—

“When land is gone and money spent,
Then learning is most excellent.”

Being a Frenchman he naturally considered every daughter of Eve was born, and should be educated, to be married—propositions true in themselves but generally falsely carried out.

And his pupil might have been more or less influenced by his wise matter-of-fact theories on this subject, were it not that when he spoke of my being one day a wife, or whenever the word was named in the least way in reference to me and to what I ought to learn, our gentle mother's face assumed a look that plainly told me the word was something improper—something I ought not to hear; and then her words to the old refugee clearly evinced her alarm lest he should put “improper notions into my little heart.”

And this led me often to speculate on a subject which perhaps other children very gene-

rally speculate upon, namely—was not our mother a wife? And if she were a wife was it improper to tell a child she too was to be one? I did think of it, but I never understood it. I knew that whatever our mother was it must be good for her daughter to be; but I saw her put up a finger or shake her head, to stop our old French master when he spoke in his matter-of-fact way of what I might require to practise if I were one day the wife of a poor man, or of what would not be unuseful to me in future if I should be the wife of a rich one, and the end of it was that I settled in my head the idea that to talk of being a wife was a most improper thing. Yet the old Frenchman's tuition, better than the boarding-school of his compatriot, for which it was for three months exchanged, might have prepared a girl for that state of life to which she appears ordained to be called,—the state of wife and mother. But now came the first, the only time, during what, in the ordinary lives of children would be called school-days, that the twins were parted. On the seventh day of a September month, I found myself left alone in a house that

was not our home ; and soon after, with surprisingly little consciousness of the fact, found myself among forty-seven boarding-school young ladies, among whom I had calculated on appearing as a wild mountain goat, amidst a herd of park-kept deer.

Miss La Mort would now be decidedly styled Mademoiselle ; she was about forty, and unlike all our stereotype ideas of a Frenchwoman ; indeed she was not like the stereotype idea of woman in general ; not like the poetic one certainly.

I would not set her forth as a type of the school-mistresses of other days, for perhaps if she had been anything else than a school-mistress she would not have been very different. It could not be habit and study that made her entirely what she was.

I am not sure that any one ever saw Miss La Mort bend from the due perpendicular ; that any one, or anything, ever extracted an unmeasured, uncalculated number of sounds from her thin white lips ; that any event ever surprised her into the expression of a feeling she was not

prepared to make visible. She was Miss La Mort ; but she was not at all like what goes under the poetic appellation of woman. How her clothes were got on and off was, and is, an impenetrable mystery. I imagine the little girls, of whom I was the least, believed that she had been born in them, and that they grew up with her : the elder ones more boldly asserted they were gummed on her form. So much the self-same thing they were, so completely and constantly and unchangedly did they appear a very part of herself. No wrinkle, no pin, fastenings, folds or plaits were discernible ; even the full ruff round her throat was secured there no one knew how ; and as for her cap—how its chin-stay was fastened, or how it was kept so flat and smooth to the sharp chin it seemed to support—not one of the forty pair of wondering eyes that daily and hourly ventured to glance at it, ever did or ever could discover.

What her dress was one day it was the next ; and so, we tacitly believed it had always been, and would be for ever.

Her large black eyes had not one gleam of

expression ; if such a thing had ever been in them it had been driven in and buried internally in some place from whence it was not allowed to issue. Her face was the colour of yellowish wax, and her thin lips a shade whiter.

These lips did not seem to part when she spoke, and when she smiled it was only known by the lips growing a little tighter : her smile, never expressed by the rest of the face, consisted in the slightest possible compression of the mouth.

Every day as the hour of eleven was striking on the great clock, Miss La Mort was seen, but never heard, entering the immense school-room. How she opened the door, or how she closed it, no one could ever exactly tell. No part of her body was disarranged by any act. She came in as if, like the heroine of a fairy tale, the door opened and closed of its own accord. She held on the bend of her little finger the handle of a small French work-basket, and advanced with a measured step to a small table inlaid with black cloth. I am certain that for a score of years the same little finger daily carried the same little basket, and the same number of steps were daily

made from the door, so magically entered, to the same little black table, where the little finger deposited the little basket without diverging the fourth part of an inch from the precise centre. And, while the hour for breaking up school was sounding, the same little finger passed under the same handle, and without sound—to our eyes, without movement—Miss La Mort disappeared. I have not the slightest notion of what Miss La Mort's system was, or if she had any. The age of systems was only then beginning, and perhaps she thought herself too well established to notice the novelties of education. There was only one peculiarity of her modes of punishing that has been indelible in my memory; it was a tone, a word merely. If she were much displeased with a girl, myself for instance, she would say, "Miss St. Pierre," in a low-toned voice, but toned so as the girl would not wish to hear it again; if she were only slightly displeased she would say, "Miss Magdalene St. Pierre," in a very mitigated, yet still impressive tone; but if she were not at all displeased, she would call me Magdalene, in a formal, yet, when you got used to it, not un-

kindly tone. Nothing, I suppose, could make her condescend to curtail a name. Wonderful to relate, I was never once called Miss St. Pierre, and only once startled to my little heart's core by hearing myself called by that singular voice, Miss Magdalene St. Pierre.

My twin brother and I had often discussed together the amount of shame that was to be endured, if I should be placed among young ladies who were educated in a strict manner. He seemed to be more fully sensible of this than I was myself ; because, perhaps, he observed other young ladies more ; and saw how unlike them I was. My only fear was that I should be found miserably ignorant ! I knew that I had not learned lessons like other children, and that in an examination such as I had sometimes heard of. I should be utterly at a loss.

The day after my arrival at school I was called before the inlaid table by Miss La Mort. I went there without fear, for I saw no other girls were to be examined.

" Well, my little girl," said Miss La Mort, most encouragingly ; " you can read, I am sure ? "

"Yes, ma'am."

"Pray what book have you read in last?"

"Marmion, ma'am."

"Marmion! what Marmion?—not—"

"Walter Scott's Marmion," I answered.

"That is a poem, which you have looked at, perhaps; but I want to know what book you have been reading in last."

"Oh! the *very* last was the Midsummer Night's Dream!" I answered with revived memory, "and I read Guy Mannering at the same time."

Poor Miss La Mort seemed paralysed. She sat silent and erect: at last the passionless eyes somewhat dilated, and she said in a slow, solemn tone,

"I must beg, Miss Magdalene St. Pierre, that you will never mention such things here. You understand, I suppose, that I wish to know what books of instruction you have been reading, of useful knowledge."

"I read Hints to Small Farmers," I murmured, blushing deeply, and beginning to feel all that ignorance I had dreaded would be developed.

There was a slight tightening of the pale thin lips ; I think Miss La Mort could have smiled.

" I suppose, child, you have not been put into any Elemental History yet ? "

" Elemental," I said to myself ; but repeated the succeeding word aloud—" History?—yes, I have read Robertson's History of Charles V. and of America, and Rollin's Ancient History, that is my favourite ; I read it twice through."

" The whole ten volumes?" said Miss La Mort, with a cautioning look, as if to warn me.

" Yes, ma'am, I just finished them before I came !"

" And pray have you read anything more ?"

" I read Bruce's Travels to discover the source of the Nile, and Pope's Homer, and Sully's Memoirs, and I began Smith's Wealth of Nations, but I could not understand it ; so I read Spenser's Fairy Queen instead,—and"—I was thinking of the Mysteries of Udolpho, but I stopped.

" Child ; you may have *seen* these books in your father's library. I ask you what *school* books you have been reading ?"

Now came the moment of expected shame. School books?—I could not think of one. At last, brightly looking up, I cried—

“Cæsar’s Commentaries on his Wars in Gaul.” I knew that was a school book, for our father said he had read it at school. Slowly again was the whole title repeated; and then, fixing her eyes upon me, Miss La Mort drew her breath, and seeming to think the enquiry was not worth the time it took, rather more hastily added,—

“Have you read Pinnock’s Goldsmith’s England?”

How glorious such a title sounded! I hung my head.

“No, ma’am,—but”—

“Well?”

“I read Rapin’s History, and part of Hume’s, and Burnett’s History of his Own Times—not all of it.”

“Pray have you learned Pinnock’s Catechisms?”

Tears of mortification stood in my eyes; I knew if I cast down the lids the drops would overflow, so I strained the tearful eyes, and strove

to subdue the swelling at the heart, of which my rigid examiner appeared to be unconscious.

"Who was your governess, child?"

"I never had any."

"What school then have you been at?"

"I never was at any school before."

"Who has been your teacher?"

"My mother."

"Your mother, my dear, must be very clever."

These words somehow consoled one under a sense of disgrace.

"You were kept all day at books, I suppose?"

"Oh no! We were always out."

"How did you learn then?"

"I don't know,—I never learned."

Miss La Mort struck the inlaid table with her white wand, one sharp stroke; an English teacher, for whom it was the appropriated summons, approached to her like King Agag, walking delicately. As a true Frenchwoman, Miss La Mort always issued her orders in the words, though not in the tone, of an earnest entreaty.

"Will you be so very good, Miss Edgar, as to permit this little girl to enter your class? You

will be so kind as to consider her equal to it, though she is not ten years old. She can read Pinnock's Goldsmith's England, and must learn Pinnock's Catechisms ; but as she seems to have been indulged in reading to herself, I would beg of you to allow her to read Sturm's Reflections for recreation."

A low curtsy was the teacher's only response, and a glance from her eye instructed me that I must do as she did. I contrived to execute the reverence that was expected, and was forthwith led to my place in the class ; where I had to suffer the pain known to many a timid child, who gets itself looked down upon by far greater ones.

How much ashamed I felt of getting above one or two whose shoulders my head scarcely reached. Once, when moved up to the very head of that half circle of tall girls, the only thought that kept me from bursting into tears was that the promotion which I cared so little about myself, would confirm Miss La Mort's opinion that my mother was very clever.

It is certain that she was, perhaps, the last of women to whom that disagreeable appellative

might apply—‘ a clever woman’ has always been to me a terrible sort of being. But at that time I had not formed any conception of such a being, and only knew that Miss La Mort meant to praise my mother.

CHAPTER V.

THE girl that was next to me in age was far from me in other things. In play time, however, we were always together; whenever I could do so I got away from the great young ladies who scorned her, to sit close to poor little Kathleen O'More in her lower form.

Her name was a curious one, and its frequent repetition rendered it more so. Miss O'More or Miss Kathleen O'More, with a marked emphasis on the Christian name, were often heard in the great saloon, as Miss La Mort styled our school-room. There were degrees of comparison in her displeasure against poor Kathleen, but the displeasure always existed.

The child was a half-boarder—that was all any one seemed to know about her; and whenever the biliousness, to which, perhaps, all teachers are more or less liable, was active in Miss La Mort's temperament, poor Kathleen formed a sort of safety valve, which allowed the machine to continue its course without risk of an explosion.

"Miss Kathleen O'More, I beg you will be so good as not to walk with your arms hanging down by your sides."

The next time the shivering girl had to traverse the formidably long apartment, she folded her arms before her.

Then, when she crossed the black inlaid table would be heard the voice again—"Miss O'More, I must request you will be so good as not to walk with your arms folded."

Kathleen's eyes were as much in the way as her arms. She never knew, as she said, where to put them. They were provokingly large and very blue; but her face was so pale that they seemed out of character with it, and designed rather for some rosy-cheeked, laughing, and light-hearted girl: when these great eyes were cast

down, as indeed they usually were, she was entreated not to look on the ground, and when they were raised, Miss La Mort begged her to be so good as not to stare.

Kathleen was indeed the scape-goat of our whole school, and the recipient of all the irascibility which certainly was rarely, if ever, vented upon others. Her hair was as troublesome as her eyes and arms. Mine was allowed to fall about as it pleased, but neither nature nor art could ever arrange hers to Miss La Mort's mind. It was of a twilight hue, that hair, but looked as if the setting sun still gleamed through its twilight. At one time she had put up this hair too tightly; at another she was requested not to allow her hair to fall about so carelessly.

In our confidences one day, Kathleen informed me that I was quite a favourite with Miss La Mort; the teachers knew it for a certainty.

"And are you too?" I asked.

"Me! O! I am only a half boarder—but your father has a very large property, and they say you are so pretty."

This speech hurt me deeply. "I am then a

favourite because my father has a large property," I thought to myself; I did not utter it; but the remark, united to all the wonderful things our old refugee tutor used to tell, of the utility of being able to do for ourselves, of the strange reverses his compatriots had gone through, and of Madame Genli's mode of bringing up her royal pupils, confirmed in my mind the desire to be poor — so poor, that, as that old Frenchman used to forewarn us, I might be forced to live by my head or hands, and even to help to support others. As to what a half boarder was I had but a dim idea: but knowing that being a boarder meant eating, drinking, and sleeping at school, I wisely conjectured that poor, pale Kathleen O'More was only allowed to eat and drink half as much as the other pupils. My portion of stale bread, and sour milk and water—for school fare at that period was not very elaborate—was not more than enough for myself, but I was thinking how I could manage to share some of it with Kathleen, when the thought also struck me that a half boarder might mean something different from my interpretation of the phrase. I asked her what it was, and she explained it.

"Your father, Magda," for this was my school name, "pays more than a hundred guineas a year for you here; so you are a whole boarder, and will be a fine lady, and have nothing to do all your life: but some one only pays the half of that for me, so I am a half boarder; and when I am older I must help in the school, and I shall be a governess, or a teacher when I grow up, and be working for myself all my life long."

I thought that must be very pleasant; and felt rather envious of Kathleen's lot on more accounts than one. There was something mysterious in her speech, and to be the subject of any mystery I felt must be most delightful. That was the part of it I remarked first.

"*Some one* pays for you, Kathleen? Do you not know who?"

"No."

"Hav'n't you a father and a mother?"

"I don't know, I think not. One day when Miss Edgar was in great good humour she told me she thought I had a father, and that he had been in the Peninsula; but that it would have been as well for me if I had none; and that my

mother died when I was born ; and it was her own secret belief that my father never knew that I was born. And then, Magda, she nodded her head, and looked so wise—oh ! so wise—I am sure she must be right.”

“ Miss Edgar could never be wrong, you know Kathleen, for she is a governess. But what I wonder at is who is the some one that pays for you.”

“ I don’t know.”

“ That is a mystery—quite a mystery—how I should like to have a mystery ! ”

“ Then you would be very stupid to wish for them, Magda, if by a mystery you mean not having a father or mother, and not knowing who it is pays for you at school.”

“ Well, that is not quite like the Mysteries I have read of ; it is not like the Mysteries of Udolpho : yet it is a mystery still.”

“ I suppose that is because it is like no one else,” said Kathleen. “ But I wish I knew what the Peninsula means. In the geography it says a Peninsula is a portion of land almost surrounded by water.”

"Do you think Miss Edgar means that my father was standing on a bit of land almost surrounded by water—and perhaps the water came and surrounded it entirely; and that was the reason she nodded her head, and looked so wise."

"Ah! I know all that, I can tell you. The Peninsula is the place where all the great heroes were fighting some years ago. Yes, I know that!—it is called THE Peninsula, as if there were no others in the world, because, you see, Kathleen, those heroes rendered it immortal—they fought and bled and died for their country. I heard our father read that out of the paper; and our mother shed tears. Isn't it beautiful? It sounds so glorious. Ah! how I wish women could bleed and die for the good of others."

"Can't they do so?" asked Kathleen, turning her large eyes upon me. And I did not know how to answer. So I went on.

"There is a white marble monument in our church, Kathleen, put up there to the memory of a young officer who fell gallantly leading his men at the siege of Badajos. Just as he got to

the top of a scaling ladder his head was carried off by a cannon ball. Your father must be a hero, too, Kathleen. How I should like to be the daughter of a hero."

"Perhaps," said Kathleen, looking frightened, "perhaps his head was carried off also. I dare say it was. I am sure I shall never have any relations."

"Now I think that will turn out quite the contrary," I said. "Depend upon it, Kathleen, you will one day prove to be a great lady, just because you don't know if you have a father or not. That is always the way in books. Depend on it you will turn out to be the daughter of some wonderful general,—or perhaps you may be found out to be a princess in disguise. Now I'll tell you how your story will go on.—First there will be some beautiful young man who will be so good to you, when you are only a half boarder, or a teacher, or something like that. And then you will think you are not great enough for him, and his relations will be very angry with him, and will not like you. But then your noble father will be found and you will be a grand lady, and the

beautiful young man that was too good for you will then be too mean ; and your fine friends will be cruel to him ; and you will be always making mistakes, and just doing and saying what you do not at all wish or intend, and so you will make him think you are cruel too. But after a great many vexations he will turn out to be a duke, or a prince, or a hero, or something, and your father will be a generalissimo, and return from the field of glory, like the 'soldier tired of war's alarm,' to repose in the bosom of peace."

" But does all that ever come true in reality, Magda ?" asked Kathleen. "One part of it I am sure will not, for I think I should never say or do what I do not mean, or make any one that I like believe I am cruel."

" Well in that case your story will come to an end sooner. All stories would be shorter if heroes and heroines only did and said what they wished or meant.

" And do you read stories like that ?"

" Yes, and sometimes I make up stories in my own head, when I am obliged to sit in

company and do nothing ; or when Basil and I lie under the great spreading beech ; and sometimes when I am sitting in church looking at the young hero's monument."

" In church ! Oh ! Magda ! "

" Not in the prayers, Kathleen : but I know the sermons almost by heart, and yet I cannot understand them. I can almost always tell the text before we go to church. One Sunday it is ' Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me.' And then the next Sunday it will be—"

" Magda, it is not right to make stories in church," Kathleen interrupted.

" But one must think of something."

" One should think of God."

" Ah ! Basil says that." And I was self-condemned.

" Well," continued Kathleen, " if all you have made up about me comes true, and if I become a rich lady some day when I am grown up, then I must take Miss La Mort to live with me."

" Kathleen ! why she is quite cross to you ! "

" But she would not be cross then. I am

only a half boarder, and it is good of her to let me stay here at all, where they are all rich, fashionable young ladies. And you know sometimes, when she takes some of us apart to be talked to in private, and get some good advice, she tells me how careful I ought to be in my conduct and manners when there is a cloud over my birth. Think of that, Magda ! a cloud was over me when I was born ! And then she tells me how I should try to make myself useful, since I have nothing to look to but to support myself by teaching what I learn now. That is good of her."

"Have you been long here, dear ?"

"Almost longer than I remember. I just recollect living in a cabin with an old woman I loved dearly ; and I think she was my mother—I am sure I called her mammy ; but I think others called her Kathleen, or Katy O'More."

"O ! then you are called after her."

"I suppose so ; but indeed, Magda, if I come to be a grand lady I must take Miss La Mort to live with me, and keep her a carriage ; for she will be old then, and I must not let her keep

school any more. So I hope your story will come true. I should like to come to be rich and great, if I were to be happy too."

"But I think it must be a great deal happier to be poor, Kathleen, so poor as to have to work for one's living. And when I am old enough to marry I will not marry a duke's son, or a prince, but a very poor man ; the poorest I can get. I think he must be what our father calls an attorney ; for he always speaks of attorneys wanting his money, and there seem to be so many of them that he cannot give money enough to all. So I am sure I must marry an attorney, because he will be the poorest husband I can get. And then I must work for him, and stir the fire myself, and brush up the hearth, to have it all bright when he comes home after looking for money and getting none ; and then he will see how hard I work."

"But in summer there would be no fire," said the practical Kathleen ; "what would you do for work then ?"

"Then I must set the tea out in the arbour myself, and gather the strawberries, and put the

cream in the glass basin ; for we would be so poor, so very poor, I must do all myself, just as I read of it in tales."

"But why should you like to work for him, Magda? Wouldn't it be pleasanter to let him work for you?"

"O no! If one is very poor and works so hard for others, then they think so much of you, and love you, and cannot do without you."

Such was my theory. Self hides beneath many a fair covering from which it does not disclose itself so readily as it did from the scanty robe in which I hid it.

The Christmas holidays approached. My first and last quarter at school ended. I did not know it was to be so, and Kathleen and I parted to meet again in six weeks. Weeks were to stretch into years. I was put into the stage-coach to go home for the holidays. The coach was overturned in the snow; it went over the hedge, and spilled the outside passengers, and coachman and guard into the field. I did not know what had happened till I saw them shaking themselves from the snow at the other side of the hedge.

The window of the coach was broken, and the elderly gentleman under whose care I was, found out that the corner next to it was the best for the child, and so changed places with me. I got a swelled face, and when our father saw me he said I looked bloated. The confinement of school did not agree with me, and spoiled my looks.

When he told me I was not to go back to Miss La Mort, I turned to the window to hide the starting tears, whereupon he said I was made quite unnatural by being at school, and wrote at once to announce my removal.

I was sorry not to return, because I wanted to learn systematically ; I felt a yearning for discipline, a fear of our wild and happy independence.

Yet in a little time the shackles were thrown off as completely as if they had not been worn. Once more the twins roamed at large and read at large. The freedom of our wood-life was soon found more delightful than the formality of Miss La Mort's terrible saloon ; and we were both of opinion that it was pleasanter to read Dryden's Virgil than to learn Pinnock's Catechisms.

CHAPTER VI.

THE first epoch of our sweet wild life has ended : we are now in our teens. The thirteenth year of our twin-life has closed. Now the girl has two young lovers ; but the boy has only his old sister-love.

I should think that in the life of a boy there is far less of mind-history to look back upon than that of a girl. That history, in woman's nature, begins, and, perhaps, ends much earlier.

Two boys were at this time the constant comrades of the twins, and both were the devoted servants of Magdalene St. Pierre. One of these, about four years our senior, was named

Walter Greville, the other, a month or two older, was Augustus Wilton. Like ourselves they were both of English families, located in Ireland. Colonel Wilton's grounds joined at one side the verge of our beautiful wood; and poor Walter Greville's stepfather had taken, while I was at Miss La Mort's, a wild-looking white house, bleak and comfortless in aspect, perched on the top of a hill about a mile distant, and known simply by the title of the White House. Mr. Greville of the White House being a man whose furious temper and unpleasant disposition rendered him a sort of bugbear in his neighbourhood, in which he did not possess any landed property to afford an excuse for his residence.

Colonel Wilton had not much, but they were considered to be high people, and ranked as such in our county.

Nevertheless I had always a great, though very secret respect for Walter Greville, and only amused myself with Augustus Wilton.

Old people always think the world is sadly changed from what it was in their youth. In some respects I am obliged to think it must have

changed for the better, since my bright youth has passed away : for now few persons would believe that in a fit of jealousy, these two boys, when not fifteen, actually went out with real loaded pistols to fight a duel.

A duel was then a very common affair ; the result of an unguarded word ; an accidental movement, of an incident that would now be set right by the careless and smiling words—" I beg your pardon." But our boys fancied there was a deeper wrong to redress ; they had loaded pistols and measured ground, but they dispensed with seconds. Fortunately one of our servant men, who had instigated and maintained the feud between them, had cognizance of this affair of honour, and placed some labourers behind a hedge to watch them, by whom at the critical moment they were seized and privately conducted before Colonel Wilton, who, unfortunately for them, being one of the greatest duellists of his day, was less disposed than they expected to reward them for their timely prevention.

Walter Greville affirmed that having deliberately insulted Wilton, he was obliged to give

him the satisfaction of a gentleman, but that he never meant to take his life, and had resolved to fire in the air.

Wilton's father boasted of his son's spirit, and the little man strutted about with the consciousness of the farm yard conqueror, and sneeringly declared he had had no intention of firing at the sky.

From that time my sentiments towards that youth began to assume the tone of dislike.

Dislike in the womanly mind may be got over ; changed, perhaps, into a sentiment the most opposite ; but if in her dislike there mingle the least shade of contempt towards its object, and that object be not of her own sex, it is irreversible.

As Wilton would not aim at the sky, I resolved to put an end to duelling between them. My will, I believed to be law, and so, as I walked in the garden with Master Augustus, I told him I did not wish him to fight again with Walter Greville.

"Not if he behaves himself properly," he answered, "and does not interfere with me again : but if he does"—and the would-be hero twitched

off the head of one of my pet flowers with a stroke of his cane, to show me, I suppose, what should be poor Walter's fate, if he did not behave himself properly.

I met Walter afterwards, as usual, in his solitary haunts, and said the same to him. The boy looked at me earnestly, as if trying to know if it were for Wilton's sake or his I felt this anxiety.

"No matter," he said, after a slight expression of this doubt. "If you wish it, Magda, I will not hurt him, let us quarrel as we may."

These boys were as unlike in person as in disposition. Walter was not considered handsome; he was tall and very large made: his features were strongly marked; his hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes, were very thick and very black, and the eyes of a deep grey, looking also at times, and especially when any emotion was aroused, to be as black as night: his face was so brown, that one might think its complexion had been formed beneath a southern sun; and the expression of his countenance was generally grave, almost to melancholy.

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Walter often spoke as if, but for us, and for our companionship and love, he should have been the victim, as many have been, of an unhappy, loveless childhood. His father was an English officer and died young while on duty in Ireland, leaving his gentle wife and her son in a forlorn state. By one of those unaccountable acts to which we are sometimes liable, she married a man who might appear to be selected as a husband for his accumulation of bad instead of good qualities—almost a ruffian in manner, of furious temper, and anything but correct in principle and conduct.

She died of a broken heart, and her son being left to the guardianship of an uncle in India, was by him continued under the care of his step-father. This man took his cook for his second wife, and together with two or three children of her own, she had taken one or two from some of her poor relations into the house, and altogether the White House, as the bare gaunt dwelling on the hill, inhabited by this happy family, was called, was a word sufficient in the country to describe domestic misery.

The countenance of Walter Greville was a peculiar one for a boy ; it was perhaps too thoughtful ; the loneliness of his life, driven as he was into himself, was the cause of this ; but it was also indicative of strong feelings, of powers that might be turned to good or evil. When we first saw him he was thrown on a bank, in a fit of desperation, rolled up, as Basil said, like a hedgehog : he had rushed from the White House and flung himself there, and wished to bury his head and forget his sense of shame and wrong. And we stood over him, and spoke to him, and pulled him, until he uncoiled and looked up at us. And he never told us anything what he thought at the moment — only he looked at me so strangely. He never, at any time, made any complaint of his home, but he asked us if we would let him be with us, and we said yes ; and from that day he was with us every day, and unless when obliged to be at his books, all day long. He had a master to come to him at home, as that, his stepfather considered, was the cheapest, or, as he said, the safest mode of education for a headstrong boy.

Walter Greville was a proud boy—proud of himself we always thought, and excessively proud of his family. He used to talk of Fulke Greville, who, I think, defended Dover Castle in times almost as old as that of the St. Pierre, with whom we said we came over from Normandy: and, whatever else he yielded to us, he would defend to the last his father's lineage, and looked down on Wilton as of an upstart English family who had been 'planted' in Ireland, but could not historically produce either a Saxon or Norman descent.

Wilton was what might be termed much better looking: his features were better formed; he was smaller, fairer, and very consequential looking. He already had aspired to manhood; one might fancy him soon to be encouraging a little whitish vegetation on the lip or chin, for he often asserted that a moustache was indispensable in the army. He was already in long-tailed coats, while great tall Walter delighted in his jacket, and he was particularly fond of that picturesque position which is formed by inserting one hand in the pocket behind, and drawing the

skirt out of its natural position. He cherished the prospect of a glass, stuck into one eye, and might have actually assumed a cigar, if it would have been tolerated by us.

Walter Greville was a manly boy; Augustus Wilton was a boy man. These two seemed to be always crossing each other's path. To Basil they both were friendly, and to me, in general, submissive; and sometimes devoted.

We had the prettiest little boat—green, with the whitest sails; and in it we four used to float down that historic river which has been the perpetuator of civil strife and faction in that strange land which is commonly called 'unhappy Ireland'—that land wherein our bright youth was spent.

Yet there were better and more distant memories which party spirit did not perpetuate, connected with that historic stream. On those banks were first declared the doctrines of peace; there was the Cross first set up by famed St. Patrick; and along these waters did the Corragh of St. Columba wind its missionary way, as he went teaching and preaching among the pagan people.

But by these waters did the ruthless Dane and wandering Viking first find entrance to the Isle of Saints, and beside them did the cause of a rightful, however unworthy, monarch perish, and conjoined with them did the Dutchman leave his name and memory to be the watchword of strife and party hatred to a wretched and fallen land.

Mindless of all save its oldest legendary lore, its fairies, its elves, and its saints, blended up indiscriminately in our belief,—our little boat along its calm, wood-fringed stream, glided in peace and joy; Basil the steersman, Walter and Wilton the crew, Magdalene the Cleopatra of the tiny galley. On, beneath ruined Castle, Danish Rath, Christian tower and fairy haunted hill; on, where the obelisk marked the scene of civil and more modern strife, where the old beautiful Church or mouldering Abbey told of Piety and Art that seem to have fled away together. On till the clear old stream changed its character, growing muddy and shallow like its modern story, and then changing itself again, and opening into a broad channel, joined the tide of

the sea. There we reached the Maiden's Tower, and talked over its wild legends.

Such a course was frequent in the summer-tide, and often did the simple music, or the shout of boyish joy, call forth from the good-natured people who lived or laboured there, a blessing on the "pleasant children of the Big House."

CHAPTER VII.

I WAS awoke very early one morning by a strange woman who leaned over my bed, and said—

“ Miss St. Pierre, you have got a little sister.”

I opened my eyes and looked into the wise woman's face. I was in my fourteenth year, yet a fairy gift, or a fairy tale, was all I thought of.

“ Where is it? What is it?” I asked, looking round the room.

“ Come to your mama and you will see,” was the reply. And I went and saw a babe, an infant, such as I had seen elsewhere; but how or why it was there in our mother's room, I

neither asked nor thought. That it was, or could, by any possibility, be our mother's child, never entered my mind.

They laid it in my arms, and the sweet sorrowful voice of my mother said—

“It must be yours, Magdalene—your own.” There was no gladness in the tone; no gladness in the languid eye; but the meek pale face looked up to mine in love.

It was a strange unknown sentiment. I had never cared for dolls. My manner of life had been fully as much that of a boy as a girl. Yet when I held that infant in my arms, my heart was surely that of a woman, filled with all the innocent wonderment of a child.

That babe was not to me my sister; it never could, in my mind, stand in the same relationship to our mother as her twins did. It was my own fairy favour.

Perhaps if I had been allowed a little longer experience of what such fairy favours really are, and of the care and trouble they impose, imagination would have sobered down.

But its extreme delicacy, and the fact, not

understood by me at the time, of its advent into this troublesome life being rather a cause of grief than of joy to our mother—induced her to adopt a practice more common then than it is now, and send the babe to be nursed by a farmer's wife, at some distance.

Before its departure the christening took place.

A large party assembled in the great drawing-room on that occasion. It was an evening party, and the christening was to take place in full assembly. Almost all the ladies wore white; our mother, with cheeks just like the heart of the blush rose, sat on a sofa in a robe of the same. Our old, stout rector, all smiles, laughter, and jest, came to share the entertainment, and perform the ceremony. He told me my nose was out of joint; and the room shook with his laugh, when such a great girl, ignorant of the meaning of the old adage, touched that rather delicately-formed organ, doubtfully, with her fingers.

A fine old china bowl had been known in our family as the christening bowl. It had served two generations, I believe, for that purpose.

This stood on the centre table, with a vase of flowers at each side.

I made some remarks about this to an old lady, who nodded her head and replied,

“Yes, your little sister is now to be made a Christian, my dear.”

“To be made a Christian!”—I looked round—I listened to the chat, the laughter, and I repeated to myself—“to be made a Christian!” The door was thrown open by a servant man, and the little heroine of the evening was carried in by her nurse.

The old rector in black coat and black silk stockings, and orthodox white cravat, rose and went to the table. Had the baptism been in church he would have worn his surplice; but at that time few persons brought their children to church, and home christenings were more the fashion.

I was appointed to act as the proxy of the more distinguished, but distant lady, who had undertaken the office of godmother: I was told I must curtsy at the responses, as I saw the other godmother do.

But a curtesy, although I saw it gracefully made, seemed to me to make no natural part of this service ; and, voluntarily or involuntarily, I knew not which, I answered audibly and earnestly the responses I read in my prayer book.

I suppose to honor or to please me, the nurse placed the child in my arms to be presented to the font—if by the word we understood the fine old china bowl, the heir loom of our house. I presented the babe, trembling with awe. I felt as if in answering for her, I had bound my soul by an ill understood vow.

But I saw the sign of the Cross made on the baby's brow ; I heard the words—and who has heard them unmoved ?—that she, the weak little bud, creeping forth to try the uncertain air of earth—that she was to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant to her life's end, and to fight manfully under his banner—and my childish dreams of heroism, of conflict, conquest, and glory, came flitting before me, as if they were embodied in the Glorious Army of Martyrs that were ever praising God ; and as I looked at the babe that was signed with the Cross, I no longer

saw the slumbering infant, but a glorious white robed spirit, soaring through fields of air, while beneath her were mists and clouds and strangled monsters ; and above was a chant of hallelujahs, and voices that said, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

And yet I knew not against what she had fought, over what she had triumphed !

I knew as little of what was meant by the World, as I did of what was meant by the sinful desires of the flesh.

Dear little Ada ! I was not fourteen years old when I promised and vowed three things in thy name, and scarcely more ignorant wert thou of their meaning than was thy godmother.

Now let the music begin, and thy christening eve be celebrated with dance and song. But thou and I, my childhood's child, have passed a moment in our lives which leaves us not altogether as we were before.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER change takes place in our lives in addition to my fairy gift. My brother had received one also ; he had got a tutor ;—a blessing quite as unlooked for as any fairy favour,—although conveyed to him by the very unfairy-like medium of a stage coach.

The fact was that in a long and tiresome journey, our father had the companionship of a young English curate who was in ill health, and wanted to see something of Ireland. It was quite natural that he should invite the young man to see a place so notable as ours, and the invitation was accepted.

Who has not felt the singular influence of a

stranger's visit in a house or family? The cause of confusion, strife, and every evil work—the insensible dispenser of peace and good.

We had been happy, wildly happy, before this unexpected visitor arrived, and we were as happy after he came. But I know not what kind of charm seemed to be diffused around us: it was like the influence of a blessed spirit, that shed a sort of softening, hallowing, and higher joy over all that we enjoyed.

Thought came to temper the wildness of our young imaginations; and those friendly and hitherto by us unknown guides of youth—Discipline and Experience, might have walked by our side, holding converse high with the untaught children of nature, in the graceful person of our clerical mentor. His visit was prolonged: he liked us, and no fear of him mingled in the reverential admiration we felt for him.

He spoke to our mother of the imaginative-ness of our character, the poetry of our disposition; he seemed to feel, or to fear for us the results of an undirected education: finally, he began not only to take an interest in it, but, at least in my

brother's case, to conduct it himself. He remained as our visitor on the conditions of being also Basil's tutor.

In after years we might both recall the words of wisdom, which passed indeed quickly and floatingly over my own light yet dreamy mind, but sank into his soul as seed into good ground.

Hitherto our studies had been one, but now they became a little separated, for my father peremptorily forbade me to learn a word of Latin or Greek; and our tutor used to terrify both him and our mother by insisting that the study of mathematics would be most desirable as ballast to my mind. Yet, child as I was, with what grave and kind respect would he direct my judgment.

I never was sensible of having had any mistakes corrected; yet I felt a change, and it was only long, long afterwards that I could look back to see how much I owed of thought, feeling, imagination, to that bright yet calm, that more sedate, yet equally happy period of our young lives, which were spent in the companionship of our reverend, yet youthful tutor.

The true and the beautiful are one.

Blessed is the child whose teacher can expound the axiom ; opening it out from day to day to its quickening perception.

The arrival of our tutor was an episode in our life ; he had spent nearly a year with us when another occurred ; which was, finally, the cause of our losing him.

I had read of sorrow in books, and as happy youth always does, I took pleasure in such sorrow. It is such a luxury to be made to shed tears for imaginary griefs, when one has never been forced to drop one for real sorrow. I thought all this was a pleasant deceit of authors and poets to make tales and poetry more effective. But that actual sorrow was in the world I by no means believed.

When I heard people speak of the world as false, mad, heartless, or wicked, I never could imagine what they meant.

And, indeed, to this day it sometimes puzzles me to understand it, considering that the persons who so speak, are supposed to make a part of that world themselves.

But then, secluded from that mighty monster, if any breath of slander against it fell on my ear, I attributed it wholly to the fashionable rage for Lord Byron's poetry. I knew nothing of the world beyond our father's domains, and I thought the world was as good and pure and bright as it was fair and pleasant.

When I thought of the future it was as if I went dancing down the darkly shaded walk of our singularly charming wood, and saw that future in the sunlight shining at the vista that terminated it. So was I enjoying the sweet and pleasant shade, but brightness was before me, and a glorious future led on my dancing step through a happy present : while not one thought of pain, or fear, or grief, or regret, marked the way that was past.

Now, however, I was to learn that sorrow, real, though to me mysterious sorrow, was in the world.

A very lovely girl came on a visit to our mother. Her beauty was of that character most likely to attract the admiration of one so unlike herself : but it was the singularity of her manner and aspect, which in my mind

invested her with something of a mysterious charm.

Her mother, though many years older than ours, had been her friend in childhood. They were distantly related, and when change of air and scene were prescribed for the depressed health and spirits of Grace Fleetwood, she was sent to Ireland, to pick up a little of the proverbial gaiety of that country, under the care of her mother's early friend.

Whatever Grace might once have been, her beauty was now of a character to excite interest rather than attract admiration. She was pale as the whitest alabaster: there was no wandering streak of colour, save in her lips, which were still ruby red. Her hair was raven black; her eyes dark as night, and often without a starlight gleam.

The varying expressions of those eyes frightened while they charmed me. From a dreamy languor, they would sometimes deepen into a dull despondency; and then at once open and expand to a flash of fitful light, that made me start with both delight and fear.

Our mother shook her head with a wise and timid look. She said Grace's parents had sent her to us to be amused and made lively ; in short to be what the French term distracted—and what place so fit for that end as the land to which she was sent ?

As the quickest way of commencing the work a ball was to be given, and the guest presented to the county families. But while in the sweetness of her pliant disposition she acted as others wished her to act, I easily perceived that our mother had herself no faith in such remedies.

The work of decoration was always my share, and this was compensation for my exclusion from the scenes I decorated.

I was not yet brought out, so I must not appear at the ball ; but this was to me no great punishment ; there was, I believe, a quiet corner in my heart into which I could at any time retreat and be very happy. Alone in the woods, with the music of the water, I could be as happy as in the ball room, or within sound of the orchestra.

My brother was not with me now, for his

tutor had seemed to take alarm at the prospect of a lady guest, and had removed to our father's fishing cottage on the sea shore, about half-a-mile from the house. My brother spent most part of the day with him, and so this day Walter Greville was my sole adjunct in the artistic work.

I have seen many stately mansions, but I do not think I ever saw among them all, a hall so singular and beautiful as that I decorated for the dance which was to do honour to poor Grace Fleetwood.

That hall was nearly the height of the whole house: there were only attics above it. It had fifteen windows; five of which were called false, as they only looked into a gallery at a great elevation. These windows were always half raised, and from each hung various banners; all the walls from top to bottom were hung with family portraits, from that of the grim warrior in coat of mail, to that of the lovely modern lady, who, in actual presence, glided among them.

I fancied they looked a thousand times better when my flowery art had half obscured their

forms ; but tiny lamps were hidden among the wreaths, and when these were lighted up the effect was curious enough.

Two graceful sisters hung side by side. One in a Spanish hat of black velvet, with soft brown hair and eyes, delicate features, and pale rose colour in the rounded cheeks, I was said to resemble. Walter did not like my resemblance, and as I was not allowed to be of the company we determined she should not either; so we adorned her in such a way that not an atom of her face was visible.

And when our work was done I ran to call our mother and Grace, who were both to enjoy it, to see how well it was accomplished. I found them in the library, the room which no bustle of preparation reached. The deep old fashioned windows, opposite to the door or entrance, were quite screened with those old fashioned things, jessamine and roses : a centre window opening beneath as a door, led out on a terrace, the forward view from which was over the broad river, though at each end it was bounded, at one extremity by the large deep trees of the

wood in a compact mass, at the other, by a picturesque greenhouse built on a declivity, with its roof covered with shrubs and plants, while on three sides the glass seemed to project from a rock that formed its back.

At the moment I opened the library door a beam from the richly setting sun tinged the deep woods with brightness, and streamed full on the face of the pale, placid figure that occupied one of those deep window seats. The day had been excessively warm, and though it was the latter end of August, all nature seemed still to be oppressed with the luxuriance of summer.

Grace leant her arm on the upper sill of the window seat. She still wore her morning dress of white muslin, and her thick black hair fell down as if it shared in the oppression that seemed to overhang all vegetation.

The white blossom of jessamine boughs hung over that dark, lovely shaped head, and the bright monthly roses peeping in, in glowing clusters, seemed to mock the lifeless hue of the marble face.

And I, silly child, sprang on and caught her arm crying, "Come and see it! it is beautiful!"

There was no answer; but Grace did not resist the rather forcible pull of her arm. She rose, and came with me in silence.

"Is it not lovely?" I asked, turning her from side to side. "And when all the little hidden lamps are lighted up, they will glitter among the leaves and flowers like fire-flies in fairy bowers."

No ray of expression lighted up the darkness of the large eyes that turned for a moment upon my childishly animated face. Slowly they turned away again, and with a vague, wandering gaze, roved round the decorated hall, and returning again to my countenance, she abruptly asked, in a dreamy, absent manner, "What is it all for?" And without waiting for an answer, or rather with the air of one who had asked what is not answerable, she slowly walked away and returned to her former position in the library window.

Youth seldom cares to answer such a question, so plucking a branch of the jessamine that strayed in at the window, I twined it round her head, then holding that dark head between my

hands, turned it to our mother, asking if the star-like blossoms did not suit it well.

"With just this one sweet half-opened rose placed there," I added.

"Very pretty, indeed," she answered; "but child, you forget that the flowers will fade; and the heat—"

She did not finish, for suddenly Grace drew her head from my hands, and rose with a strange air of disturbance; her eyes dilated in the singular yet beautiful manner they sometimes did.

She jerked her head suddenly from my hands, and shook down some leaves of the roses on the floor. As they fell, those deep white eyelids followed them, and then, murmuring in a low abstracted tone—the "grass withereth, the flower fadeth"—she walked out of the room without taking any notice of those she left.

I stood the very image of wonder and apprehension. I did not know what I feared, but I felt that something must be wrong with Grace. I turned to my mother and saw her with her head bowed down, and a look of doubt and trouble on her face.

Grace Fleetwood is very strange to day," I remarked.

"Strange, indeed, child, very strange—poor thing!"

"Do you know I think, mama, that she would prefer a walk in the wood to-night to the dance."

"And which would you prefer, Magdalene?"

"O! the dance. I can always walk in the wood, and am not allowed to go to balls. Grace is tired of them, and of theatres, and operas, and all that; and she must go to them whether she likes or not."

"You know, child, young people cannot do just what they like," said my mother, gravely, and looking as much as to say she was sure her children did not do so. And I thought to myself that I had never once, to my recollection, been made to do what I did not like, although in some instances, I was withheld from doing what I should have wished to do.

But I was to be tire-woman that evening, and I quite longed to dress Grace Fleetwood. My love of beauty was extreme, and I pleased

myself with fancying how lovely she would look in her rich white lace over pale pink silk, with white roses in her hair and a single provençe rose for her bouquet. With my own morning frock unchanged, I ran away to make Grace begin her toilette.

I found her in her room; she did not reply when I told her it was quite time to dress; so taking her silence for assent, the maid unfastened her white muslin robe, and we were about to commence hair-dressing, when she quietly rose up, fastened her dress in silence, and without saying a word walked out of the room.

A second attempt met with the same result. She was perfectly silent to any arguments or entreaties, did not seem to be conscious of them, tacitly submitted to what we did, but in a few moments rose up again and replaced all we had undone.

Our mother's consternation became extreme: that her guest, if she appeared to her company at all, would undoubtedly come among them precisely as she was, became now very evident. But amidst all her trouble I well remember the exclamation she often used—

“How fortunate that your father brought her here himself!”

The company arrived. Miss Fleetwood's illness was announced, and our mother appointed her own maid and myself to the charge of watching over her, advising that she should go to bed and be kept quite quiet. We were all convinced that Grace did not like this gay party, and was resolved not to join in it. The party, however, went on, for people who have come to enjoy themselves, do not generally suffer the disturbances and troubles of others to prevent them from doing so.

The whole object of the evening was lost to me, and the window of the gallery from which I could have witnessed the scene in my decorated hall—where I had imaged to myself our lovely Grace, with her skin of white swan's down tinged with the roseate hue that had once been natural to it, moving in the light of the flower-hidden lamps—was occupied by the servants only; for Walter, who had insisted on being there, now said there was nothing to see. It was past midnight when our old nurse began to assist Grace to undress

and prepare for rest. Several times in a whisper and with a mysterious glance, she had informed me that the moon was at the full. I knew it, for it was round and clear in a calm blue sky ; and I felt not a little surprised at the oddity of the repeated information. The last time she said this I replied that I would go and see it, and so I left her and Grace and went downstairs, meaning to take a turn in the moonlit wood, as I often did at the same hour, and though Basil was at the cottage I thought Walter or Wilton would be there.

The company had gone to the supper-room : the drawing-room was empty, and the hall silent. The glass door of the former was open, and I sat down on the stone steps and enjoyed the beauty and tranquillity of the scene. The question that Grace had asked came to my thoughts. —“ What is it all for ? ” — I looked at the scene before me. — Nature sleeping beneath the tranquil moon. I thought of the scene that was precisely behind me, within the house on the step of whose door I sat, and no homily that ever was written or preached was more forcible

to my mind, than were its own sensations that evening.

A step came slowly from the deep wood advancing on the terrace walk. I jumped up, sure that Walter was walking there, and I meant to startle him. There was no hiding place but the deep window seat of the drawing-room within. I sprang into it, and sitting on the sill with my feet in the old fashioned seat, I was quite concealed by the curtain, while the flowers and shrubs without screened me from sight. The step came on, and, to my surprise, I saw it was our reverend tutor.

I had not seen him since Grace Fleetwood was our guest ; and as he slowly paced the walk with head bowed down and the pale moonlight on his face, I was struck by a more sad and anxious expression than I had ever seen there before. I was about to leave my hiding place and join him on the terrace, when the opposite door of the room opened, and Grace Fleetwood, in her white morning dress, and with the jasmine wreath still twined round her head as I had playfully placed it, walked slowly in, with the air of a

sonnambulist; her eyes were open but seemed as if they saw not.

She walked to the centre of the room, and stopped directly under the large chandelier, the light from which fell full upon her. There she stood, her head erect, but the interlaced hands hanging straight down before her with an expressive listlessness in their posture. The step on the terrace stopped. I looked through the window; and saw our tutor stand gazing at the white robed and illuminated figure. He raised a hand to his brow, made a movement as if to enter the room, and stopped. He would evidently have retreated, but Grace saw him. A look of fear, wildly beautiful to see, flitted over her face: she looked round quickly on every side, as if wanting to fly away, but like a wild, wounded bird, unable to do so. That look determined the watcher outside the door. Calmly and steadily he crossed the floor; took both the white hands, and laying them between his own, said,

“ Grace—my child ! ”

There was deep tenderness, but it might have been fatherly tenderness, in the voice and look.

Without a word, without a movement, or a sigh, the poor girl's head was laid upon his breast, as a child upon its mother's.

He bent his down over it, his lips touched her pale forehead, outwardly so calm and cool. She started at the touch; her eyes dilated with a wild and fearful brightness, she rubbed her brow as if to erase a mark, and then slowly walked out of the room, without a word or look of recognition.

It was in my nature to make myself at once visible as the involuntary witness of a scene at which I was not supposed to be present. But our tutor only clasped his hands, raised them with a deploring gesture, and seeming to breathe a prayer to himself, hastily retreated from the room, and away through the wood.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day Grace did not rise at all ; she seemed oppressed with sleep. The doctor came, but could not as yet pronounce on her case : he enquired if she had gone through fatigue. She had indeed the appearance of one who had gone through suffering either physical or mental.

The twins were together that day ; free to ramble as they had been wont to do, for our tutor too was indisposed, or absent, or busy, and could not attend to my brother.

That night I slept in a room adjoining that of Grace Fleetwood ; the wainscotted walls allowed means both of hearing and communicat-

ing between them. It seemed to me that in my sleep I heard my name distinctly called.

I woke, and rose at once. The moon was indeed at the full, shining clear and bright through my open window. I passed my hand, as I well knew how, along the panel of the wainscoting, and a door flew open ; I passed through a narrow inner passage, passed my hand again along the opposite panel, another door opened, and I was in the chamber of Grace Fleetwood. I went to the bedside, but she did not speak : I leant down, and said—

“ Here I am, Grace, do you want anything ? ”

There was no answer.

I thought I had been mistaken, and then fearful of disturbing her, I crept back to my bed.

I am not sure whether I had slept or not when I again heard myself called. I rose and did the same thing with precisely the same result. Yet once again it occurred.

I woke with a start, for the words, Magdalene St. Pierre ! were distinctly and audibly ringing in my ears.

The sun was rising, and I got up, resolved to return to my broken sleep no more for this time.

I went to Grace once more. The light of day now fell on her face, and I saw that she lay with her eyes wide open and fixed on the opposite wall, like one in a state of unconsciousness. Her lips were apart, and her breath came heavily. She did not appear to see me, and when I spoke, she seemed not to hear me.

I think that was the first pang of terror I ever knew.

Our mother, with pale face and tearful eyes soon stood beside our poor guest.

The eyes were still wide open, the lips apart the hard breathing continued.

Grace was, to our perception, dying.

Men and horses were despatched here and there for doctors. The flower-wreaths in the hall were scarcely withered yet ; and there on her table stood the branch of delicate jessamine that I had twined round her head the evening before. The maid had put it in a vase of water, and it had revived.

The perishable flower was there as if looking

at the bed where she who had worn it—the stately, beautiful girl—lay, to all appearance, dying.

I was little given, still am little given, to speak of anything, to appear even to notice or be conscious of anything that may belong to the secrets of others. But at this moment I felt, I know not why, as though I had a secret on my mind which our mother ought to know. She saw me looking at her in a manner that plainly said I had something to tell, and her question drew out the answer,—

“Do you know, mama, Grace and our tutor are friends—must be old friends.”

She smiled, a smile that shone up into her eyes. My voice, my look, were those of one who had a mysterious secret to impart.

“I know it, dear. But she did not know he was here. Her parents did not know it either. He told me all about it before he left us to go to the cottage.”

There was now one cause of surprise to me in which all others were lost. Our mother had had a secret! I never supposed it possible she

could know anything we did not know. Somehow I received a fresh sentiment of respect from a knowledge of this fact.

The mind has dates in its own history to which it turns in retracing the changes that have occurred in its character. The evening of that day is one of those dates in my mind-history. Then indeed "A change came o'er the spirit of my dream," for in my dream I had seen only joy and gladness, love and beauty. And now suffering—suffering that seemed to be the result of sorrow—was brought close before me.

That was the first shadow that flitted over the brightness of life, such as I had pictured it, such as I enjoyed it. The shadow was not a heavy one, yet it was there; it made itself felt and was not forgotten.

That evening I sat in the window seat in Grace Fleetwood's room. The golden tinged woods were at rest; the scene as calm, as lovely as it had been the night before, when the house resounded with music, and the voice of merriment.

Just beneath, on the walk leading into the wood, our mother was standing in conversation

with our tutor: he raised his eyes with deep, earnest anxiety to the window, and the movement of his clasped hands appeared to indicate that he breathed a prayer. But at that moment my attention was withdrawn from him, for Grace, who had never stirred, and scarcely given signs of life all day, began to move.

I went to the foot of the bed meaning to speak to her, and, to my surprise, saw her sit up erect in it, slowly take off her cap and shake down her long rich hair.

"Shall I help you, Grace?" I said in some delight at the unexpected recovery.

Without an answer, without any notice of my presence, she broke out into a wild magnificent strain of song—something unlike any music I had ever heard before, and unlike any I have heard since—in a voice so loud, clear, and thrilling, that at once delighted, distressed, and terrified, I covered my tingling ears with my hands.

Pale and trembling, our mother rushed into the room. That wild song had floated out even to the walk where she had stood talking to our tutor. It must have caused other ears as well as mine to tingle.

Never have I forgotten our mother's aspect at that moment: I was too much occupied by what was around me to think of him who dared not enter that room, but must have heard those thrilling sounds. She had rushed suddenly from him, and she stood at the foot of Grace Fleetwood's bed, her hands in her own expressive manner crossed on her bosom, her meek face pale with terror, and her eyes seeming actually to tremble with fear, pity and anxious love, directed to the bright, widely open, but unconscious orbs, that appeared trying to penetrate through the opposite wall, as Grace, still sitting up in the bed, sung wildly on.

"Merciful Father! there is insanity in her family!" was my mother's involuntary exclamation. But Grace heard her not.

When her song ceased, she composedly put on her cap and lay down, as if she had thrown off in singing the burden that had oppressed her: the hard breathing ceased, and she seemed, to all appearance, restored to health again.

That was the first night I ever spent in a sick room; the first time, at least, that I ever had to

sit up with an invalid. Often and often had I been reminded that the moon was at the full. It was so, and its golden ray shone over the river that lazily flowed before the window ; a fine merchant vessel coming in with full-spread sails caught that light on its canvas, and it glowed like an angel's wings, as the stately thing passed up the channel, with the green meadows on each side, like a living creature walking in brightness.

I tried to read Young's Night Thoughts, by that clear but unavailing light.

Strange vision !—Strange to me now, yet how distinct !—Distinct yet distant. The child of fourteen years of age, laid along that deep, broad window seat, in her white frock, trying to read Young's Night Thoughts by the moonlight, while she sits all night through watching the bed where the moon-struck rests in an unbreathing repose, that will, at intervals, be broken by a gush of such wild, strange song, as art could not imitate, nor imagination describe.

The moonshiny river ; the ship in full sail, catching on its flowing sheet the white glory of

that radiant orb, moves on calmly, beautifully, to the ocean it sailed to. Storms and tempests are before thee, thou beautiful thing; but on thou goest, in confidence, passing the eyes of the childish watcher, who looks at thee with rapture now, and shall think of thee hereafter.—For how long!—how very long!

Was all this sent to me? Was I in coming years to draw upon such mind-pictures, as from the well-spring that freshened a dry and thirsty land.

The memory of the dying returns, they say, to the most distant point it can reach. So does imagination return for nutriment to the scenes where it was born and reared.

So passed my first night's watch; and when the moon—whose fulness seemed in the judgment of our wondering domestics, to have cast a fatal influence on poor Grace Fleetwood—had retreated once more into the shadowy sky, and the twilight of day was creeping on, the door softly opened, and our mother, in her white dressing robe, stole in, and sent me to sleep.

CHAPTER X.

THE next day, when the usual hour of rising came, Grace got up, dressed herself in her accustomed manner, without any singularity except that of being perfectly silent, not appearing to hear when she was spoken to. She rejected the slightest vestige of colour in her dress, and when it was completed she deliberately undid the great bows of hair which had been piled on her head, and shook it down into its natural state ; then hastily rose from her seat, took a white handkerchief in her hand, and waving it out at length, cast one wild, startled look around, and burst again into her strange song.

How seldom is the imitation of madness af-

fecting! It is because it is untrue to nature. Acted madness is very often quite as ridiculous as it is wrong. Yet what a study for the actor might poor Grace have been! Her carefully arranged white dress fluttering out as she swept with hurried but regular pace, through the long galleries, and up and down our beautiful hall, her white handkerchief waving with the motion of her hand, and her voice pouring out its ringing, wildly thrilling melody—music invented by herself; the words, too, either a random composition of the moment, or taken from some book she had read. Her favorite song was the curious chant of Meg Merriles, in “Guy Mannering.”

“Wasted, weary, wherefore stay
Struggling thus with earth and clay;
From the body pass away.
Hark! the knell is ringing.

“From thee doff thy mortal weed,
Mary Mother be thy speed.
Saints to help thee at thy need,
Hark! the Mass is singing.”

And O! the manner in which that ‘hark’ would be sung—stopping short, glancing round,

with eyes so fearfully bright and beauteous, and as if inviting some one to hearken; then hastening on again in her rapid walk as if she had heard the sound she stopped to listen for.

Thus day after day, for more than a fortnight, did she continue presenting to my actual eyes something more mystic and exciting than imagination had ever depicted for me. But what pleases us in imagination is often hard to bear when it comes to us in reality. Madness had in her case assumed an uncommon, even a romantic cast; there was nothing in it revolting or terrific; but it was still most melancholy, most heart-rending to witness.

The servants stood still and blessed themselves, as like a distressed and wandering spirit she rushed along the echoing passages and down the wide staircases, filling the high roof with unearthly sounding melody: her voice reaching the most distant part of the great house, arresting every step, making every ear to tingle, and every heart to thrill. In the gloom of evening it was almost fearful to see her thus hurry past, her eyes so widely open and so painfully bright; her white dress

floating in the air, and her dark hair falling like a black veil over it.

This was a real picture ; and whenever I have seen counterfeited madness—it has not been often—this reality has risen to my memory.—So young, so lovely, and so sad. Thus was I first to learn that sorrow existed in reality as well as in fiction.

Medical aid could do nothing. The doctors who had all agreed that Grace was to die, now agreed that she was to live ! She might regain her senses they thought, or she might not. And her parents were to come to her directly.

It was when this opinion was pronounced that our tutor sent into the house to ask me to come to him on the terrace. He took my hand and held it. He was very pale, and his countenance heavy with sorrow.

“Magdalene,” he said, “you are a dear child—if I had not loved you before—now—for the sake of ”—he stopped, and held my hand in silence.

“Magdalene” he continued, “such a heart as yours will yet be tried. Follow its noble impulses, my child—but may God’s grace teach you to dis-

cipline it : the world's discipline will else be bitter to you."

He laid his hand upon my head, and blessed me just as a patriarch might have blessed his child.

And I stood there feeling as if his hand still lay upon my head, as if his words still sounded in my ear until my mother said,

" Why are you standing there, child, so still at this late hour ?"

I started and went into the house, still thinking over the words " such a heart as yours will be tried"—and wondering what sort of heart it was, and how it was to be tried.

Later still I saw our tutor walking slowly along the terrace with my brother ; his arm was round the boy's neck ; he was looking down on him, but the boy's head was bent down. That was the last time I saw our tutor.

That night I saw our mother had been weeping. I thought she wept for our tutor and Grace Fleetwood, and I began to ask her some questions concerning their acquaintance. To which she replied—" My child, I would tell you all about it, only it is like a love story."

And at this I wondered for two reasons ; first that there should be a real love story in real life ; and next that I was not to know in real life what I read in abundance in books. But then I always heard people say that love, in books or not, was all nonsense.

A few days afterwards Grace's parents, who had been summoned from a distant part of England, reached us after a fatiguing and tedious journey. The physicians had once more agreed that it was advisable to tell her of their arrival. The intelligence might be beneficial, or it might be quite the reverse. As it proved, however, either supposition was erroneous ; for it had no effect at all. It was perfectly unheeded. Grace did not seem to hear it. She did not speak, nor change countenance, but soon afterwards she rose up, and that wild look passed hurryingly over her face, seeming finally to settle in the eyes, which alone retained that expression, while the rest of her face was calm, pale, lovely as ever. Then she burst from us ; breaking into a louder, wilder strain of song, pacing the hall with a more rapid step.

Another consultation of doctors followed ; and again they agreed that the parents should be admitted to see their afflicted child : there had been cases where the sight of friends produced the most disastrous effect ; and there were others where the experiment had been tried with the happiest result. In short Mr. and Mrs. Fleetwood sat one day in the drawing-room with our mother waiting the usual entrance of poor Grace.

The way in which she usually acted was this. By the doctor's advice we had managed to get her to take her breakfast before rising, as we found she now never sang until her toilette was completed. This was about eleven o'clock in the morning, at which time her wild burst of song would be heard floating down through the house as she came rapidly from her room, traversing the long gallery and broad staircase till she descended to the great hall, which she paced with firm and rapid steps from end to end several times, the handkerchief streaming, and the white dress fluttering, and the loud strange chant echoing through it, day after day, in precisely the same manner.

All at once, as suddenly as she had begun this double exercise, as suddenly it would be suspended.

The wildness of her look and manner always ceased with her song and walk : it seemed to have been cast off in them, to have been exhausted by them : and with a dejected air she would enter the morning drawing-room, and sit down at a small table where her needle-work remained from day to day just as she left it. There she would sit silent and calm, appearing to employ herself, but not actually doing anything. She never read, and never spoke, but if anything disturbed her she got up, and walked up and down the room quickly.

Now her father and mother were in the room, when Grace, having exhausted her wildness in the manner I have related, entered it calmly.

Her father had sunk back in the large chair and covered his face with both hands as her singular dirge had tingled in his brain. Her mother, pale and rigid, preserved more outward composure.

As Grace entered they both rose, and the mother extending her arms said —“ Grace! my child!”

Grace stopped, looked at them; then walked on to her table, and took up her work. Not a minute of breathless silence on our part had elapsed when a wild light came to her beautiful eyes— a flash, almost fiery, seemed to dart from them, she flung the work violently aside, rose up, clasped her hands, and raising them up so joined, she broke into a loud mad strain, so piercing in its strange melody, that her poor father sunk back in his chair, his frame quivering with emotion; her mother made a step after her, as if to catch her in her arms before she rushed from us to her usual walk in the hall; but she had only made one step when she fell senseless on the floor.

And on, and on, and on, through the greater part of that fearful day, did those wild strains continue to ring through our house. Along the hall, through the corridor, and up and down the staircase, she floated, with but few intervals of cessation, almost all the day, with an impetuosity,

—a violence that had yet not characterised the movements of our unfortunate and lovely Grace.

That was, indeed, a terrible day: but the evening saw a change. The wild bird had beaten its poor breast too hardly against its bars; it lay spent with its own violence: so was Grace that evening. The fire of her eyes was gone; her exhausted voice was still; the wild energy that impelled her movements, was spent. She lay breathing hard, as she had done before her singing began, and from that hour she sang no more. Life's fitful fever seemed well nigh over; it had burned itself out. She was henceforth quiet, gentle, but still silent. She rose up, after a few days illness, sadly changed in appearance: the beauty—melancholy as it was, that excitement had given her, was gone. She evidently knew her parents, and the scrupulosity with which she obeyed all they said, although she never spoke, was almost painful to witness.

I, for my part, could not comprehend this, and I think pitied Grace Fleetwood far more when I

saw her thus subdued, quiet and inert, than I had done when I saw her in her strange yet even beautiful delirium.

The doctors said now their experiment had succeeded, though on the day on which it had been tried, they had agreed in declaring they had apprehended a bad result.

In a few days more another consultation was held, which ended in a unanimous concurrence with the opinion, which, Mr. and Mrs. Fleetwood, and, I believe, our own father and mother had already delivered, namely—"that the patient might now be removed, attended by one of the faculty who had watched the case:" for to do more than watch it was indeed out of the power of the conclave who daily delivered some verdict upon it.

Finally, Grace Fleetwood left us, and the first shade that had fallen on our home removed with her; yet left a shadow behind it.

Such is life. An event, even what we term a trifling one, passes over us, or passes by us, and it has left a mark upon us we know not, or at least

perceive not for years afterwards. It has taken something insensibly from us ; it has added something insensibly to us. Years afterwards we look back and find a mind-date or a heart-date to rest there ; and we turn to that small circumstance, as the first link of a long chain ; or we see in it the germ of an idea, or the commencement of a purpose, which has coloured our whole life, or tinged with darker, brighter, or softer hues, the character of our mind.

Reading Young's Night Thoughts, by moonlight—listening to Grace Fleetwood's wild, wild song—watching her through the night hours in my fifteenth year, had a greater, a larger influence on me than any one imagined : and yet our mother's words—"I would tell you her history, child, only it is like a love story"—had perhaps a greater influence than all.

A good many years afterwards we were shewn the grave of an English Priest in the English burying ground at Pau. It was shadowed by a young willow, and Basil knelt beside it, for we read on the stone the name of our tutor.

CHAPTER XI.

LIFE begins to deck itself in rainbow hues ;—
the arch of promise without the memory of the
storm. Imagination bathes her wings in rosy
tints, so soft, so delicate, so glowing.

The twin children are fifteen years old. Beautiful fifteen !

I muse on the past with a tender sigh,
Till sadness falls like a dark cloud o'er me,
On my youthful days when Hope was high,
And life like a garden spread before me.

Sweet flowers of promise bloomed therein,
And sunlight streamed in golden glory,
Alas ! from such blossoms no fruit we win,
Ere winter comes on his pinions hoary.

And Love was the brightest of all that grew,
'Twas the rose that garden fair adorning ;
A wild enchantment around it threw,
'Twas bathed in the purest hues of morning.

Its blushing leaves were in dews arrayed,
 Like sparkling gems in sunshine gleaming;
 And the murmuring breeze that round it played,
 Seemed music heard from the land of dreaming.
 Alas! that our earthly treasures decay!
 Each blissful vision the heart has cherished,
 But memory's pang will not pass away;
 The thorn lives on when the flower has perished.
 And thus the bright garden in beauty shone,
 Which fancy had dressed in endless gladness;
 But ever, as further I wandered on,
 It seemed a desert of gloom and sadness.

The boy and girl were fifteen.

"Once more who would not be a boy?"
 exclaimed one who knew what a poetic boy-
 hood was: and I have often answered—only
 one who was not a happy girl of soft, and
 bright, and innocent fifteen.

There must be more poetry in the dawning
 life of womanhood than in that of manhood.

Childhood and youth are beautiful, but the
 transition state is a marked epoch in the heart
 and mind-history of woman—of a thoughtful,
 feeling, happy, unsophisticated girl;—

"Standing with reluctant feet
 Where the stream and river meet;
 Womanhood and childhood sweet."

The tame bird boldly hopping to the open

door of its cage, looking out with its bright, fearless eye, claiming kindred with all that is beyond it, yet disposed to return to the perch where it has sung in gladness and joy without ever thinking that its cage had been left—The rose opening in sunshine and shade to the cool calm, brightening sky; the slow stealing sun-glory that colours the soft white cloud—ere yet the day star burns with all its power—these may image that transition state, or recall it to those who have known it.

Thought begins to temper the careless joy of childhood; soft, deep-felt, yet unascertained happiness—happiness mixed with a pensiveness that is happier still—takes the place of childish merriment. The prospect of life becomes more exquisite, vistas of the future more captivating, its visions are fairer, yet more undefined, more unreal than ever. The glow of health on the cheek is toned down, the laughter of the eye is subdued; the music of the voice is sweeter, the clear ringing laugh is softer.

The whole heart of a happy, thoughtful, unworldly, and innocent girl of fifteen, is a volume of romance.

OUR OWN STORY.

Oh ! let the dainty rose awhile
Her bashful fragrance hide ;
Rend not her silken veil too soon,
But leave her in her own soft noon
To flourish and abide.

It was a haunted house in which Magdalene and Basil St. Pierre spent their blissful youth. There was a good deal in and around it too that might nurture an imaginative turn of mind. It was a singularly romantic as well as beautiful old mansion, standing in a large, thick wood, of a most unique description—I never saw another like it. The approach to the house was by one of the short broad avenues of old times, bordered by immense lime trees, which swept their long branches over the grass on each side ; and this avenue formed a break between the wood before and that behind the house ; the entrance to the avenue being from a private road that crossed the domain. The extent of this domain enclosed us within its circuit as within a little world of our own, for we scarcely knew of any beyond it. The drawing-room at the side of the house, with its quaintly painted ceiling and wainscotted walls, opened on the broad terrace, which was

bounded by precipitous slopes cut in the green turf, and this, more than a gradual decline, gave the mansion the air of standing on an elevated site : and at the end of the level green in which they terminated, the river flowed to the sea, and often bore to or from it some small white-sailed merchantman that seemed to move as if through our own grounds, bringing its goods from afar.

The quaint old mansion was of bright unfaded brick with facings of white stone, the walls within were all wainscotted, and curiously painted to resemble different kinds of marble ; they abounded with secret springs ; passages running all round them between the inner and outer wall.

It was no wonder the house had the reputation of being haunted ; previous generations had probably played in these passages the same tricks we did.

I might have learned, by my own terrors, to spare those of others.

I well recollect one severe winter night, when we had succeeded in terrifying the whole tribe of men and women servants which our house con-

tained, that awakening from my sleep, while the snow lay high round the house, I threw a hand out of the warm coverings upon the side of my bed. It lighted on an ice-cold one that already lay there. With a thrill of horror I drew it back—a cry for my brother—my usual help in trouble, was bursting forth, but horror withheld it. I was only thirteen, and notwithstanding our ghost making tricks, I was, as imaginative people are, disposed naturally to a belief in all spiritual existences; such a belief easily invests its object in materiality, and so I was for the moment convinced that a dead hand that had once acted its part in this haunted house, now lay upon my bed.

A moment's recollection brought me more to myself. "I was not quite awake," I said. "I fancied it in sleep—now I will try again." Trembling, slowly, I put forth my warm hand—touched the cold dead one;—it was there! O! the inexpressible spasm of terror—of horror. The great, solid, old fashioned bed felt to tremble under me.

My touch was light, was instantaneously removed, but sufficient to prove that a cold hand with all its several parts lay actually there. To

rise was impossible, to shriek was not in my nature—to this hour when most frightened I am most silent.

But presence of mind came back again. "I have fancied this," I thought to myself, "in consequence of what we were doing last evening. Imagination I have been told is very strong; I know I should not imagine now—I will feel it with my other hand.

So I felt for my other hand first, and found my arm, and then I tried it outside the clothes till I came to the dead hand: there it was sure enough—my very own hand stiff and cold as any dead one that ever appeared in a haunted house. If I had not searched out the matter I should have grown up in a belief that nothing would dispel.

This old romantic place, the beautiful wood and its moonlit scenes, supplied the mind with memories which imagination drew upon when its life-wearied powers could no longer create materials wherewith to work.

Little did the happy children think that the ghostly legends, the quaint figures of lovely dames

and stately knights—the very story of the tapestry which one set of four fingers had worked with one golden needle—were all to be brought into service in an active and very different state of life; were all to find matter-of-fact employment, and be turned into regular daily work in different scenes, and in strangely altered circumstances.

Up to our fourteenth year I think the mind of the twins had been one; but from that time a distinction was apparent; my brother was still my twin-existence; yet there was a difference; it lay not, perhaps, in the character of our minds, but in their direction. The difference, perhaps, was like that of our persons. We were told that if dressed alike no one would know us apart. Dress makes a great difference; education does so too.

Up to our fourteenth year our intellect and our imagination had been most luxuriously fed at our own free will, without the least restraint, the least training, the least discipline. We had never been subject to the process of education.

It was well for us that a change took place.

The influence which one human being can exercise over the mind, even over the destiny of

another—the influence which a casual interview, which, it may be, even a few accidental words may have in producing a series of consequences—is often acknowledged by persons who in retracing the marks of their road through life, perceive how many steps have been, either knowingly or unknowingly, made under the results of such a casual influence. This is seldom thought of while we hurry by each other on the world's highway, or else we might shudder to know the results of even one light, and, while it was passing, pleasant conversation.

It is true that persons, who in general society appear always to aim at doing good, very frequently only do harm ; but without apparently ever trying to do good ; I never knew any one who constantly tried, spoke, and acted more uniformly, as if under a consciousness of this influence, and of its responsibilities, than did our tutor. It was to this manner, I think, still more than to his actual instructions, that we owed so much. It taught us that there was something to be guarded against, even in ourselves : it gave us some notion of that mental discipline to which

we were utter strangers. But in this respect my brother, being more with him, had the advantage of me. I saw my twin soul rising above me; even in aspect he was changing. I always wondered why he should be reckoned so like me—he was so beautiful. His eyes and hair were darker, his complexion paler. Now he seemed to my eye to grow more beautiful, and more unlike me, because intellectually so. But the finest intellect, at once nourished and untrained, will run to wildness; and then its aberrations startle the world; and simpler, inferior, yet better regulated minds, rejoice in mediocrity, and consider genius as anything but an emanation of divinity; and so Imagination—that glorious faculty, which, more than any other, raises the spiritual above the animal being—has become a bye-word, a reproach, a taunt, on the lips of the ignorant, the dull, or on those who, in their own opinions, are happily not imaginative, and in whose judgments imagination is another word for falsehood, and Genius a name implying folly or madness.

Our tutor must have seen with some degree of painful interest, the undirected course of our

free happy life, emerging as we were from an unfettered childhood, as ignorant of ourselves and of the world before us, as the imaginative Indian of America looking forth from the shadow of his native woods. My brother was his constant companion for the short time he was with us, and when I joined their studies he seemed to consider me as the fire-fly darting through sombre objects that were in contrast with it. He told our mother that I was full of poetry ; and she defended me from the charge, but said she wished I would try to improve my mind, and for this end she made me a present of Hannah More's *Strictures on Female Education*.

Yet there might have been in that mind all the materials for a useful, as well as a fair, a lovely structure : but they were left to lie in a careless mass, or at best only partially arranged into a sort of fantastic disorder. There was no wise foundation laid, there was no firm hand to cement the polished stones, to mould the graceful adornments.

Self-education must be as defective as it is painful. Experience—dilatory reformer of ill-

built work—can discover defects, can supply props, can patch or alter, but its lessons are too slow, require to be too often repeated, to be all brought into service in the short period of one human life.

And yet, alas ! the real ills of life
Claim the full vigour of a mind prepared ;
Prepared for patient, long, laborious strife ;
Its guide Experience, and Truth its guard.

But experience must come from something beyond itself, otherwise the guide will only be at hand when the ill has been suffered.

The true object of education is to train all the powers that God has given to man, to their highest and noblest—or in other words, to their proper use. We often speak of selfish persons as living for themselves: this is an error in speech; such a life is impossible, unless it were the life that Robinson Crusoe led before he was joined on his desert island by his man Friday. “No man liveth to himself:” in greater or less degree each acts on each for injury or for good. This was the first principle of our tutor’s plan

In the acquirement of ideas, the attainment of knowledge, the formation of habits—not mere personal taste and its indulgence was the object to be considered, but the cultivation of powers bestowed on one human being to be developed and exercised for the good of all.

This demands intellectual and moral training—or discipline: the purifying and raising of the mental springs of action; the government of intellect by conscience and by religion.

This training the brother enjoyed in a greater degree than the sister.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR tutor was gone, but a new delight came. Age loses without regaining ; youth quickly supplies its losses. Little Ada came home just as the exciting interest caused by poor Grace Fleetwood had subsided, and just as the void left in our daily life by the departure of the curate required to be filled up.

Darling little thing ! what a substitute for a wise and reverend teacher !

When I first saw my child she had just been put into the arms of the strange woman who was to take charge of her, while her weeping foster mother was avowedly trying to escape unseen, but really wanting to prove the fondness of one

for the other. The result was a terrible scene of crying and struggling. The moment I approached the screaming child she stretched her little rosy-arms, clasped them round my neck, and hiding there the little face convulsed with crying, stifled her sobs upon it. Our father was disturbed by the uproar ; a crying child gave him the idea of pain—he could not bear it. Our mother, with a bewildered countenance, and to the foster-mother's joy, began to propose that the child she had had for eighteen months already should go away with her again for the next six.

“ She is mine !” I cried, “ she shall stay with me.” And I ran away with her in my arms into the wood.

Before I had carried her long she was fast asleep ; a sense of ill-usage seemed to overcome her, and she slept in my arms, insensible now to the tyranny that had been exercised over her affections. A new love was kindled in my heart, yet excessive as it was, it could not make me unconscious of the load in my arms, and so I carried my child off the path into the centre of the trees, and laid her down to

sleep there. One peculiarity of our wood was, that it was formed on a slope, and in one part a very high path overlooked a very low one: in the intervening space the ground beneath the thick growing trees was profusely covered by wild blue-bells, which were now in full blossom. Little Ada wore a cloak and cape of the same colour and selecting a nice soft spot I laid down my fairy gift in quite a fairy bed, and went on my walk.

Before I had gone very far, Wilton met me and invited me to go to see an immense white owl which he had shot, and which I had certainly seen dead ten days before: but now it was sitting up alive on the bed of dead leaves where it had been thrown.

I went with him instantly, and with great wonder saw the singular creature, quite erect, winking and rolling its great yellow eyes. How it had come to life, how it had managed to stay alive there by itself, while it could neither fly nor walk, being utterly disabled from procuring itself food, was quite mysterious. But now to bring it home and feed it, was the first thing thought of. This was not easily done, and Wilton proposed putting

a final end to the creature. He had always a tendency to cruelty: he seemed to think he showed his manliness by wishing to kill the owl. I secured it, hastened home with the wounded prisoner, put it in a dark closet as the most congenial place for it, and got it food.

Just as my cares were ended the dinner bell rang: we were always obliged to hasten to table by our father, though allowed to hasten from it whenever we pleased. When dinner was nearly over, he remarked to our mother that he hoped she would never let him hear the child cry again, and she, looking at me, said:—

“Your child has been very quiet, I suppose she is reconciled to her new place.”

A terrible pang seized me. My child!—where was it? left out in the wood among the blue-bells! forgotten for the owl!

Without a word I rose and ran out of the room, our father calling after me—

“Don’t bring it here if it will cry.”

Along the high walk I ran with the swiftness of fear; but having gone a considerable distance from the house I stopped, recollecting that

I was running at random. Where was the place where I had left the child? I darted down the bank, dashed through the blue-bells—stopped, looked around—all was still, and not a break or opening presented itself to my eager, hurried, and at last terrified gaze. I looked in vain—so I stood and listened. The cry so frightful to our father would have been hailed with rapture by me. Not a sound—but that all-pervading one from which the summer air is never free. I raised my clasped hands, I darted through brushwood and brambles, frantically calling out Ada! Ada! and forgetting the little creature could not answer me.

There was a sound, a spring down the bank behind me, and Walter, catching me in his arms, exclaimed—“Maida! for pity’s sake what is the matter?”

The boy looked as frightened as myself.

“I have lost the child,” I cried, breaking away.

“The child—what child?”

“My child—Ada—O! find her! find her!”

Walter told me afterwards that a terrible fear

had seized him when he had seen me thus, my frock all torn, my hair in the wildest disorder, plunging through thickets and thorns with looks so wild and full of fear. All that he had heard of poor Grace and my long companionship with her, made him dread that some malady had seized on me. But now recovering his self-possession, he held both my hands tightly, and made me tell him calmly what had happened.

“Well we will get Juno,” he said. “Unless the fairies have reclaimed their gift, Juno will find it, Maida; never fear.”

In a few moments Juno was got, and sent in among the blue bells; and we soon had the pleasure of seeing her stand still, wagging her tail and turning her head back as much as to say—“there is something for you here; come and take it if you please.”

So we both ran together, Walter holding my hand in order to run quicker over the difficult ground. And there was my child still snugly laid in her cradle of blue-bells. Poor dear! she had evidently woke, and cried herself to sleep again, for the bright tears were still fresh on her rosy face.

I caught her to my breast and ran away without a word to Walter or his Juno. It was impossible to mount the bank, however, with the child in my arms, without help, so I stood and looked back to him. Walter had not stirred.

"Why don't you come and help me?"

"Because you did not seem to want me when you had found something else to occupy you."

"What can you mean? Don't you see I cannot get up this bank with the child in my arms."

"Well then give it to me," he said, springing up the bank, and I lifted the child up to the hand he stretched down.

He grasped its clothes and drew it up, my extended arms following the mounting creature as far as they could.

"What a shame to take a child in such a way as that."

"And if I had taken it by an arm, or by its neck I might have dislocated the limbs."

"You don't love the child, Walter?"

"No, I do not, I don't think I shall."

"Then I shall never love you."

I was standing on the bank when I had said

this, and went to take Walter's burden. But he arranged the child on his arm like an experienced nurse, and looked down in its face with a smile.

"Come, let me take it."

"No, pray let me keep it a little longer."

"You will love it then?"

"Oh! yes, if"—

"There! I knew as soon as you took it in your arms you would love it! I did so."

"That shews there is a sympathy in our love," said Walter, very seriously. Now Maida, sit on the felled tree, and I will give you the child on your lap, because you see I never had such a thing to hold before, and it is beginning to make a face."

I sat down and took little Ada on my lap, and Walter sat down also.

I shewed him the cherub face, and asked why he had said he did not love her.

"Because I thought you loved it more than me. Do you do so?"

"Well I rather think that I ought; it would be natural you know. Ada really *is* my sister."

I fancied he might doubt a fact which was almost disbelieved by myself.

"Maida! can you not understand—"

"What?"

"I do not know what."

A ringing laugh made the serious Walter laugh also.

"Well, if you can't understand yourself you will not wonder if I do not understand you; but I am sure if you only could feel my love for this little angelic darling, you would know that it is different from anything one could feel for a great, almost grown-up young man."

"Star of my heart! sweet, lovely, darling Maida!" he cried, and the child, apparently more startled at such a string of epithets than was the young nurse to whom they were common terms, began to be restless.

"Now I must go in."

"No, stay, you always want to leave me now, and it is so long since I saw you."

"Ridiculous! you saw me yesterday."

"No, I did not, the day is too long when I do not see you for me to forget it."

"Well if I was not with you, I know I was with Wilton, for we went—"

"Maida! you cannot be, you will never be a heartless coquette!"

"What is a coquette?—is it a cruel thing, Walter?"

Walter smiled at my somewhat anxious face.

"To tell you the truth," he answered, "I do not know what it is myself; but Wilton's eldest brother told him you were a little coquette, and cared neither for him nor me, though you amused yourself with us both, but that you would aspire to be the wife of some one greater than either of us; that you would be admired—"

"The wife,"—I said with scorn—"what a shame for Wilton's brother to say such a thing! How wrong to say that I would think of being any one's wife? And to say that I would want to be admired—how could I be admired I should like to know?"

"Do you *really* not know that you must be both admired and loved, Maida?" said Walter Greville, very gravely, "for if you do not it is

just as well you should know it at once. Look at this hair—it is dark, yet when I smooth it like that”—drawing a lock tight over his finger—“its darkness looks like that of a river flowing over golden sands. And the eyes are the same colour with the same sunlight shining through them, especially when they smile as now.”

“Smile at your nonsense, I daresay. Have you done? I cannot get up while you hold my hair.”

“Not yet. Then there is the cheek, that is just like the moss rose that blossomed in the hot-house last February, and fell to pieces directly.”

Another laugh.

“Well I hope my poor cheek won’t fall to pieces at all events. Really, Walter, I know not how you have learned to talk such nonsense lately. There now! you have made the child cry. Hush, darling, hush!”

“Wait, Maida, wait! I know the best way to stop children crying.”

“What is it?”

“Kiss them; that stops their mouths.”

It would not stop Ada’s, however, she wanted

poor child something more substantial to fill it, and the idea began to suggest itself to my mind that the child was hungry ; it was one that even Walter could not resist, and he was purposing to go and carry it some food, when the new nurse appeared, sent in search of the child by our mother.

An explanation was thus rendered necessary, and in relating to our gentle mother the story of the lost child I told her also of Walter's talk with me afterwards, his want of love for it at first, and the effect which merely taking the fairy gift in his arms had produced.

She looked at me with gentle seriousness, and said "Do you know, Magdalene, I am afraid you may lead Walter Greville to fancy you are in love with him. Certainly as you are a child, and he a mere boy, it is no great consequence, but it would be shocking if he, or any young man, should ever conceive such an idea when you were grown up."

I felt my cheeks glow, and I wished to ask why such an idea would be so wrong, but after a short silence she added—

"Do you read Hannah More's *Strictures*, child, and Chapone's *Letters*, and Dr. Gregory's

Advice? I remember how my mother used to recommend them to me for directions on this subject."

So the next time Walter walked with me in the wood, he said,

"What is the matter, Maida? Why are you so changed to me?"

"Changed to you? I am not changed to you."

"Then you must be changed to every one; you are not at all like yourself."

"How droll! Who am I like then?"

"I don't know;—no one exactly;—but yet more like other young ladies."

"I must be improved then. But in what respect have I the advantage of being more like other young ladies."

"You are becoming affected."

"Affected!"

"You are not so natural as you used to be."

"I think then you had better leave me to myself," I answered, with rising anger, and turned into another path.

But he was by my side again.

"Will you not walk with me, dear? You will not have me long to walk with." I looked up at the face that bent over me, startled at the time at the words.

"I am going away; I shall soon go to India."

"India! O Walter! Walter!" I clasped my hands and burst into tears—the first tears he had ever seen me shed. The clasped hands were held to his breast.

"I am not going yet, darling; I am only going to the College in England for more than a year; then I shall return; then you will know more than you do now. You will not then tell me that it is ridiculous to say you will be admired and loved. You must not tell me then that love is nonsense—but all I ask is that until then you may know no love but what is now in your heart."

There was a strange earnestness in the manner of Walter Greville. I had always listened to him with a sort of respect, and never more so than while he spoke thus, holding my hands and looking in my eyes with those dark grey ones of his suffused with an emotion that changed them almost to black.

"When do you go, Walter?"

"Very soon."

"I wish you would not go."

"Why do you wish me to stay, dearest?"

"Because,"—I paused, for my mother's caution came again to my mind.

"Well? tell me, do!"

"I shall have no one to row the boat."

"Affected again," said Walter; "this is the result of being taught that love is nonsense."

"There is the dinner bell! let go my hands, Walter."

"There!" he cried, dropping them, "I would not retain one little finger if it were not given with the whole heart."

"Are you not coming in to dinner, Walter?"

"Do you wish me to do so?"

"How very provoking you are grown, quite suddenly. Are you not always free to come when you please? Did you ever ask me this before?"

"No."

"Why do so now?"

"Because I want to make you speak as you

own mind feels. Yon won't ? Well then, good bye."

"Certainly I wish you to come—let us run."

We took hands, and were ready to start.

"Why should you fancy I didn't wish you to eat your dinner?"

But we were in full career, and ran straight on through the billiard-room window ; Walter declaring that if he could get his hand free he would turn back, and calling me all sorts of names for my explanatory question.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN the sweet and splendid scenery of the Pyrenees, it is a lovely thing to see the strong warm sun of early morn shine amid the soft blue haze that lightly fills the balmy air of the exquisite valleys, coming between you and the glorious mountains, like a veil of gauze shading the radiant face of beauty.

Such a haze came now to temper the bright sunshine of our young life's morn.

That life was still happy, very happy, but the haze was around us.

Basil was studying Greek and Latin ; Walter was away ; and the shadow on our mother's lovely brow was falling deeper, was becoming visi-

ble even to her thoughtless children. Was not the haze mingling with our sunshine? Yes; but it only softened the brightness; it gave no indication of a looming cloud.

Wilton was in sole possession of our morning haunts: but in the evening he left these haunts to the twins, for he now considered himself too much of a young man not to be otherwise engaged after dinner than he used to be when a boy, so we had them to ourselves, and there often, when the midnight moon looked at us through the trees, there the twins wandered together, their arms round each others necks, their hearts, and thoughts, and feelings one.

Were the hours lost, or were they, to one of us at least, to be as the Castalian spring to which a parching mind and weary brain were to return to draw drops of refreshment? Was this childhood of poetry to prepare the way for a life of prose?

Wilton took every occasion, when we met, to speak against the absent Walter. I did not like this, and I felt whatever degree of affection I had for him as one of our little set in childhood was

turning into a sentiment of dislike, just as the youth appeared determined to take the case for the reverse. It struck me that he wished one to like him, but could not condescend to the appearance of trying to make one do so ; and I began to suspect that at present, this desire proceeded more from antipathy to poor Walter than from any real attachment to myself.

So one day I said to him

“ Wilton, I beg you will not say anything to me against Walter ; he is our friend, and I never will give him up.”

Wilton fixed his round small eyes upon me, with a look that I thought was full of something like cruelty.

“ Perhaps,” he said, “ there are not many who would dispute Miss St. Pierre’s right to such a possession.”

If he wished to inflict a mortification, he succeeded in doing so.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE eldest brother of our Augustus Wilton was one of a species I believe to be extinct in our present matter-of-fact-business-and-common-sense times ; a species described in some of Miss Burney's novels as Insensibilists, but which in our own early times passed under the title of Exquisite, Exclusive, or, in vulgar speech, Dandy.

The state of his father's affairs left him in reversion only the usual inheritance of trouble that devolves in such cases on elder sons ; but being an Irish gentleman he was not, of course, brought up to any profession. He had, Walter Greville said, been offered a commission, but declined it on the ground that to have to appear

on parade was an amount of suffering he could not endure for his country.

The same authority asserted that, notwithstanding his inability to support any trouble, Fitzroy Wilton gave himself a great deal by rolling his tongue up in his mouth every time he spoke. Indeed his manner of speaking must have been formed by putting the top of that member to the roof of the mouth. He never turned his eyes, looking straight forward as if at invisible figures, or slowly whirling his person round if it were necessary to look in another direction.

Everything was, in the term of the day, a bore to him—all the objects, purposes, sensations of existence were summed up in that little word.

Yet this young man was one of no little consequence in the county—as an exquisite—but as nothing else. He was *THE FASHION*; whatever Fitzroy Wilton said or did, all persons who wished to be fashionable might say or do. He had attained that which was, I suppose, the only aspiration of his order—notoriety.

One day he came into our wood and stood

with us looking out at the charming prospect from our promontory ; and I told Walter Greville afterwards that he certainly must have forgotten to roll up his tongue, for he spoke quite naturally.

“ O !” said Walter, with something of a sneer, “ he knew whom he was speaking to.”

And I pulled up my head and said something very saucy, for I thought he meant that the great man did not think it worth the trouble of doing so for me.

However, all at once Fitzroy Wilton became a really great man ; for the gentleman in India he was named after, unexpectedly died and made him a rich one.

At the same time there was an election going on for the county, and a grand ball was to be given by the member on whose side our father was. Mr. Fitzroy Wilton, now called the young Nabob, was invited to do honor to himself and the hosts by opening this ball ; and to avoid the dangers of jealousy, the member’s wife being unable to dance herself, the choice of a partner was left to himself.

Perhaps the selection of a universal emperor

to sway the destinies of Europe, would not have excited half such intense interest, or caused so much speculation in the little region in which he was now an absolute power, as did that of his choice of a partner for a dance.

Our father and mother talked of it; Basil and I talked of it; every one guessed, and every one was at a loss; and the young Nabob was the only one indifferent and unconscious on the subject.

I had no idea of seeing how the matter went, for I had not come out, and of course was not to go to the ball. A few days previously, however, our mother met with an accident, which obliged her to stay at home, and as her presence was of consequence, our father went in person to relate the circumstance. The result was that he was requested to bring his young daughter, and as he never could refuse a request he engaged to do so.

"You must go, Magdalene," said our mother, "as your father wishes it. You need not be afraid, love, no one will mind you. Your father will leave you in Mrs. Stopford's care, and if you are not asked to dance, you must amuse

yourself as well as you can. I do not, of course, approve of children going to balls, but it cannot be helped now."

This was my first ball, and I was delighted—excessively fond of dancing, the music and my own sensations of enjoyment always rendered me unconscious of all else around me when so engaged. The prospect of my first ball of course occupied my mind till the day it came; but then I was very near missing it, for Wilton persuaded us to go out in the boat, and the tide turning we were unable to get back until nearly the moment of my father's departure.

If it had depended on Wilton, I suspect we should have been still later.

Our mother was waiting in suspense; the maid was out on the watch. I ran up to her room, and found all ready for my toilette. The prettiest frock of what was aptly called spider-web muslin, for it was like a delicate white cobweb; silk stockings, and blue satin shoes—all lay prepared, and our mother put on the frock, arranged the hair that had as yet been suffered to grow as nature willed it without being 'turned

up,' and then to confine it she fastened her own pearl bandeau in such a way as to appear more for use than ornament, and tied my long white sash behind, after the fashion of the day, and then drawing a few paces back, she looked at me with a smile by no means disapproving, and eyes that seemed quite well pleased with what they looked at, while in a deprecating tone, she kept saying—

“ Well!—after all you don't look so bad—I really think you will do well enough. But remember, my child, not to be giddy.”

At that instant my father's loud voice sounded in the hall, calling on me to descend. I snatched one hasty peep at the glass, my only one during the dressing process, and then flew off; our mother, standing with Basil at the top of the stairs, holding up a forefinger, and calling after me,—

“ Remember, love, not to be thoughtless and giddy in company.”

I jumped into the carriage, and we were off.

We were entering the assembly room; I was leaning on our father's arm, and as the glare of

light from within fell on us, he looked from my face down over my figure, for the perfection of the latter was, in his estimation, as it is, I believe, in that of other men, a matter of more importance. All at once his hand caught the skirt of my spider-web frock. It was a fairy-like dress, looped up round the bottom with innumerable little rose buds, and its length, unlike present fashion, very considerably displayed the feet of the wearer. My father made it still shorter by an impatient pluck to one side. I looked down—what a sight! There was one blue satin shoe and silk stocking, and one black shoe, that I had worn in the boat—one foot changed, the other unchanged.

He turned me round and hurried me down stairs. I thought I had seen the last of my first ball; and yet not even that thought could keep me from shaking with suppressed laughter.

The carriage was fortunately still at the door, and to my wonder and joy, he ordered it, not home, but to a milliner's in the town, where a pair of silk stockings and white kid shoes made my odd feet even; and the uncommon ductility

of my father's temper gave me a sense of triumph; so that when we returned to the assembly room, I felt myself entering it with a mind more elated by what had passed, than occupied by anxiety for what was to come.

The first sight I beheld was a group of Highland officers standing opposite to the door by which we came in. One, whose face was nearly enveloped in a circlet of red hair, turned his head after us as we passed, much as a wild beast in a menagerie looks after passers by.

I was placed beside the elderly lady who was to matronize me; but she being deep in discourse with one more of her own standing, I was left in contemplation.

To be at home with Basil seemed to me at that moment much more desirable.

The recollection of what Walter had said occurred to me; he had said I was growing more like other young ladies, and said it, too, in a tone of reproach. Now I had almost all my life long, a very morbid sort of conviction that I was unlike other young ladies; and as I looked round on most of those I saw, I could not help

feeling certain that Walter was wrong, and that I never should grow like them. Intent on the thought, I was wondering at some, admiring others, yet not perhaps exactly wishing to resign my own personality for any. How often do we say, I wish I were like you—to a friend, yet if the wish were to be granted, it would be revoked ; but, mentally I was occupied, while sitting silent and unconscious of being noticed, until I was absolutely startled by seeing the Highlander make a spring and plant himself beside me. There he stood, precisely as if upon duty, but so close to me, that either to rise or continue on my seat was rather difficult.

I was released by the approach of a lady of our acquaintance, at whose sight the gallant Highlander made two steps in advance, said something, and then gave her his arm. To my dismay both advanced to me, and the lady presented her companion in due form, whispering afterwards to me—"Only two removes from a Scotch title—the son of a Member of Parliament ;—has an estate in the Highlands of his own."

Meantime the Highlander began a rambling speech about his having dined with the opposing member, and then as he considered it his privilege to belong to both parties, having come to dance for 'our man,' finally asked me for the honour of my hand.

Ignorant as I was of the world it was plain that the gentleman had not *eaten* only at the table of the opposing member, but even had he been perfectly sober I should never have thought of dancing the first dance with an ugly man at my first ball, and therefore I very plainly and distinctly made answer that I could not do so.

"Was I engaged?" he asked.

"No."

"Then Miss St. Pierre does not mean to dance to-night?"

I nodded, but whether in assent or denial was left indeterminate.

The Highlander drew back to the opposite wall, and leaning against it took up a post of observation, from which he certainly succeeded in annoying the enemy. Dancing could not com-

mence; for the hero of the evening refused to make his appearance: all were waiting, many murmuring; but Mr. Fitzroy Wilton was a nabob and a lion as well as an exquisite, and so took his own time.

At a late hour he sauntered carelessly into the room as if he had dropped in just to make his bow—if tight dressing allowed him to do so—and saunter out again.

The lady started up in amazement to assail him with questions and soft reproaches.

“Who is your partner?”

“Partner?—O! ’Pon honour can’t think—must have one—Ah!—excessive bore.”

A glass ascended to one eye and remained there of its own accord: it was the first time I had ever seen this hideous sight of a glass thus inserted: and I laughed, silently as I kept looking at it; but the glass travelled round the room in a slow sweep, and when it came full in my face, I burst into an irrepressible laugh. The glass dropped, and with a look of real surprise, as much as to say—“Is this child here?” the young nabob came quite quickly over the

room, and without waiting to roll up the tongue, asked to have the honour of dancing with me.

I jumped up and gave him my hand without a word, but I suppose I looked very pleased, for I felt as if I had been the winner in a game without ever thinking about it. The waiting couples were not detained longer; in a minute I was in my place at the top of the room:—but there, opposite to me, as soon as the music began, there stood my gaunt Highlander just before my partner. Not understanding this, Mr. Wilton touched his arm and observed the position he had in mistake taken up. But turning his face back to him with a scowl, the other answered surlily—"Right, sir; I am in my proper place as this lady's partner; if she dances at all she dances with me."

Fitzroy Wilton stepped forward, and drawing up to me said calmly,

"Was I mistaken in thinking Miss St. Pierre allowed me the pleasure of dancing with her?"

"No! no!"

"You are not then this gentleman's partner?"

"No! no!"

He turned :—there was a clash, the jerk of a sword, a volley of screams from every one but myself.

I had meant to run out of the room ; but the door stood wide open, and I ran behind instead of through it. I suppose only some minutes passed while I stood there with my hands before my face, but they were minutes spent in dreaming. The sound of my name buzzing round me was the first thing of which I was sensible.

“ She is not worth it—silly little thing ”—was the flattering finish of the speech I heard. I glanced through my fingers, and saw a knot of stalwart Highlanders holding my hero pinned to the wall, one having his hand on his shoulder and another his knee pressed against him. At the moment my father’s voice came on in a rather angry tone, demanding to know where was his daughter.

“ Here ! Here ! ” I whispered, and slipping from behind the door caught his arm ; he drew me through it, led me down stairs, summoned his carriage ; put me into it, and we drove home in silence. I stole to my room, afraid to seek

our mother. I felt I had done something very wrong, but I knew not exactly how, or what it was.

It was already past midnight, although we had returned some hours before our expected time.

My brother was always my help in trouble; so after some anxious and uneasy meditations in my own room I crept to his.

It was a very large one—large even in our large house: it had red walls, a large red bed, heavy red window curtains, couch and chairs: it was all red but the floor, which was of polished oak so dark as to be almost black. In the centre of this floor stood a heavy round table of nearly the same dark coloured oak, and beside the table an old carved oak chair to correspond. There was a very high toilette table with a dark red cover under a thin white muslin one. That bit of white muslin was the only light coloured thing in the room, for even the coverlet of the bed was of rich, old fashioned crimson silk. It might well be called the red room once, but now the black room would have been nearly as appropriate a title.

This room was my brother's choice, and on that

table stood some books which were favourites both with him and our mother ; St. Thomas-a-Kempis, Pascal's Thoughts ; St. Augustine's Confessions, Nelson's Fasts and Festivals, and a few others. I used to look into these books too, but always fancied Young's Night Thoughts would have been more in unison with the aspect of the apartment.

The boy who occupied it was asleep ; as I came in I woke him, and he half rose, leaning on one arm to hear my history.

" Well," he said, when I had finished, quietly lying down again, " did the great Highlander take up Fitz in his hands and crush him between them, as a Bois Guilbert would have done ?"

I had been undecided whether to cry or laugh in telling my story ; his enquiry caused the latter propensity to predominate. " But I am sure our father is angry, Basil, and I fear mama will think I did something wrong—she charged me so to be like other people."

" I don't know, dear, but I should think it was the Highlander who was not like other people. I do not know much of dancing cus-

toms, but I have heard of ladies refusing to marry one man and marrying another, so I should think they are equally free to refuse to dance with one and consent to dance with another."

"Indeed it is a great shame if they are not, and I am sure I would rather never dance again than be obliged to dance with a partner I disliked. But yet I fear there is such a rule, or custom, for I have heard ladies say they were engaged merely to evade it."

"Miserable! How false to nature are such fashions."

"But it is not this that troubles me so much, Basil; I heard the officer's sword clang before the others got hold of him, and you know if there was an insult—a blow,—there must be a duel; think if he were to kill Wilton's brother! I wish you could get up Basil, dear, and go to meet Fitzroy coming home, and tell him I do not wish him to fight with the Highland officer."

"And you think Mr. Fitzroy Wilton would be like Walter Greville and obey your wish?—especially now when he is the nabob's heir."

“ Well if he would not I should not care so much if he were wounded at all events.”

At this moment our mother came in looking rather grave, as if prepared, as our father would say, to give us a lecture.

She looked at me, and then changing the expression of her face, she began—

“ My dear child—now Magdalene, you know I really love you very much.”

And this was her lecture on my improprieties.

Although at that time the least accident in a crowd, the slightest mistake in speech, might occasion the loss of one or two lives as an affair of honour, Mr. Fitzroy Wilton was satisfied with saying, that the Highlander not being in his sober senses, was beneath the notice of a gentleman; and as he was now a great man, the whole county and the towns-people also were of the same opinion; so that, not only the offender, but the whole of his party, were sent to Coventry; and a paucity of invitations soon showed them the necessity of conciliating “the silly little thing” who caused this feud.

CHAPTER XV.

PERHAPS summer with all its blushing honours is scarcely so delightful to lively, active youth as the joys of a really severe winter. While shivering age, and shuddering poverty, recall the memory of the 'severe winter,' with associations of pain or of suffering, to us it brought only recollections of pleasant times and things.

The beautiful piece of water in the most romantic part of our grounds, was admirably adapted for skating. There was no restriction on its use, and persons who came to skate on it were almost sure of meeting with hospitality at the proprietor's house.

The Highland officers, however, were among the former but not among the latter.

The picturesque costume, and noble figures which some of them displayed there to advantage, were quite in unison with the scenery. One, in particular, who actually was named Fergus Mac Ivor, was quite a living personification of that celebrated character; with the black plumes of his bonnet shading his fine features, he would glide stately over the white surface, performing with careless ease the most difficult manœuvres: but much as the plaid and the plumes, and the wearer too, were admired, they only recalled to me the person I had seen pressing the furious Highlander to the wall, and saying in order to cool him, "She is not worth it; silly little thing!"

Day after day they all skated there; and day after day they walked away again without ever being invited to come in and take lunch.

One day, however, I was standing on the edge of the ice speaking to Basil, and remained there after he had skated away: my persecutor of the ball room passed several times up and down, close before me, and as I had been instructed to consider him as a total stranger,

and neither avoid nor recognise him, I obeyed directions, and preserved a perfect unconsciousness, until all at once in some unaccountable manner, down came the Highland hero flat on the ice, with his head precisely on my feet.

At once I was on my knees, raising his head, and calling for help. I believed then that I had a vocation for the work of a sister of charity. A circle of plaids and plumes were soon around us; we were both assisted off the ice; but before I was moved I looked up to see the wondering eyes of Mr. Fitzroy Wilton still fastened upon me, as I held the great red head in my hands.

The wounded officer was of course conveyed to our house; and it was soon asserted that poor Miss St. Pierre had been so dreadfully alarmed by the accident, that she had been conveyed thither also by the rest of the party in a fainting state.

If I were, however, ill from fear, it was certainly causeless, for the object of my imputed concern was very rapidly quite well, and did ample justice to the substantial lunch that always awaited our skating visitors.

The opportunity was taken for a very humble apology.

The next issue of the county journal related in language worthy of the best penny-a-liner, the accident that had befallen Captain——, and set forth in florid terms the kindness with which the sufferer had been received by Mr. St. Pierre and his amiable family.

The interdict was at an end.

A pretended fall, however, led to a real one. Master Wilton, as I used to call him when I had no other means of avenging poor Walter, was envious of the success of the Highlanders; he bought himself a plaid, wore it across his shoulder, and thought he looked to equal advantage on the ice; but he exceeded them in one respect, for he got a real fall and an actual wound, instead of mock ones.

Basil was holding his head in our hall, and our old nurse bathing it, when I came in, and knowing that our mother used sal-volatile for fainting, I ran to the medicine chest, took out a quantity of some pungent stuff, and forced him to swallow it. Tears were flowing on his pallid

face, when the officers came in, and seeming to believe he was crying from pain, mingled with their condolences exhortations to be a man and bear it.

Certainly that burning dose cooled Wilton's young love for the blundering giver, more than anything had before done. I felt that, as he looked at me through his tears.

Perhaps the ferocious Highlander might after-all have made the hero of my own story. At least in after years I began to suspect this, but at that age I seem to have lived in a dream that had little or no relation to myself. All my thoughts, speculations, visions, more or less related to other beings, real or imaginary. Not withstanding what was called the nonsense of Walter and Wilton I never imagined the possibility of having a lover. Love stories I made up in my head, but I framed them for other people.

I never knew or cared to know whether our father or mother were talking of me, when I came to the door of the drawing-room one day, and found him walking up and down, as he

always did when in discussion, and heard her reply—

“Whatever he may possess I would rather follow her to her grave than see her the wife of Captain ——”

From that day I saw my Highlander no more. The regiment was soon afterwards sent abroad.

Strange to think, where are now those stately forms! In another hemisphere most of them have mingled with the dust. And the weak child remains—lives on, labours on.

CHAPTER XVI.

AND now the winter is over and gone ; the time of the singing of birds is come, the voice of the turtle is heard in the land ;—and passing sweet it is to hear it in our wood at eventide.

My birds had taken wing. During that hard winter I had a whole room full of willing captives ; they were so glad to accept board and lodging gratuitously, when they could not, with all their pains, find them out of doors.

When I opened the door of the apartment I gave them, they came fluttering round me and took their food as if it were given by an old friend.

But one morning the sun shone bright and

warm, the snow and ice had melted away, and when I entered the room with the daily food, I was received in another manner.

My birds saw they could do without me or it ; they flew round and round in irritation ; they beat their breasts against the windows : trust and gratitude seemed changed to apprehension and aversion : my proffered kindness was now evidently an annoyance. Almost frightened at my apparent obtrusiveness, I hastily opened a window, and my flock of pensioners flew eagerly away from me. I stood stupified for the moment, under a feeling of having my kindness thrown away.

Was not this one of the life lessons that are daily taught us ? Benefits conferred on those who love us not will be thanklessly dispensed with when the need for them is over.

Gratitude is the comrade of affection.

If we bless our enemies, let us not murmur if they bless us not in return.

But now the leafy month of June had come again ; and one of its loveliest evenings had come too. Nature was in the fulness of her life, the

glow of her womanhood. Oppressed with their own leafy luxuriance the long curving branches of the lofty limes hung listlessly over the wood walks, and all vegetation seemed anxiously to await the leave-taking of the too ardent sun, which still darting its latest rays through each opening in the mass of foliage, shed lines of golden light here and there upon the softly shadowed grass.

Magdalene St. Pierre wandered slowly on, along the high walk of her own dear wood. It was a broad grassy walk—not always so grassy, for the frequent tread of feet had once worn it bare; but now those feet were treading separate paths. The twins for the second time in their lives were separated: the first time Miss La Mort had taken the girl away, now Basil's tutor had taken the boy. He had gone for some weeks to the house of a classical tutor as a means of realizing more speedily the day-dream of his young life—an entrance at Oxford.

Walter was absent still, preparing for an entrance on a different life: Wilton had nearly abandoned the wood; the Highlanders had marched away to embark for foreign service,

bidding its owners good morning, as if they expected to meet them next day—to the inexpressible astonishment of the “silly little thing,” who, after so many pleasant days spent there, had been quite prepared to expect a scene. Thus Magdalene and her little satellite, Ada, had it alone, and chased each other along its paths, breaking its silence with childish glee.

At one side of this high walk was a bank which parted it from what was called the Wilderness, a tangled mass of wood and wild flowers, rocks and flowering trees—the black cherry and walnut, mulberry and holly; and behind this again was the Rookery.

At the other side of the walk rose all forest trees; the white stem of the graceful birch, and the dark form of the pine; and underneath their shade grew all the wild fair things that need no artist’s hand, nor borrow a charm from artificial help.

In the centre of that broad walk there stood a large old elm, called the “Fairy Tree,” after that which the maid of Domremy, the poor Joan of Arc, and her young comrades, used to dance

around. And many a time had children as happy and as full of deep enthusiasm, danced around that stout old elm.

But now one silent walker came slowly and meditatively along that walk. The mind is a barometer; it has its own states and feelings, which are pretty sure indexes of sunshine or cloud. There are times, too, when a simple wish for solitude and thought, a quiet propensity to pensive reflection, might serve to foreshadow the coming season for which such preparation might not be unsuitable.

Enwrapt in pleasurable, yet pensive thought, Magdalene St. Pierre strolled down the shadowed walk, abstractedly planting her foot on a line of sunlight, and lifting it off as if to see if it were in mortal power to blot the sunlight from an earthly path. Even little Ada, the well-beloved child, would have been an annoyance that evening—and so she walked on alone, and slowly; her arms folded in the loose sleeves of her white muslin frock. As she came near the Fairy tree, she saw along the ground on which she looked, a tall shadow fall from behind that tree quite across the walk.

She looked at the shadow ; her heart bounded. She ran and jumped upon it ; stood on it, and called out, " Walter ! " and the shadow extended its arms and closed them again.

* * * * *

" What ? wrong !—Will you still tell me that love is nonsense, Maida ? "

" Yes ; and mama would be displeased if she heard you talk so. "

The question and answer were spoken as they sat on the felled tree, which must have been laid there before the twins were born, for they had sat on it from their earliest recollection.

" Yet I have come back purposely to make her hear me, " was the youth's reply.

The girl looked in surprise and doubtfulness on the manly form beside her ;—so changed in so short a time : the broad chest enclosed in the tight, half military coat, and the countenance to which a thoughtful mind gave the gravity of manhood mingled with the fire of the energetic youth. The peculiar character of the face well corresponded with the deep toned, earnest voice. Walter Greville was no longer a boy, and Magdalene St. Pierre felt he was not.

Her head was bowed down, for the Fairy Queen, as he used to style her when he was a boy, fancied she had lost her sceptre and her subjects.

"I have waited for you so long, Maida; I wanted to see you here first, here on this very spot. It was here we parted, and I knew you would come here this evening."

"And, I know not why—I did not think—but I felt as if you were here—is it not strange, Walter?"

"No."

"Are you to go to India, Walter?"

"It depends upon you. My uncle has promised to arrange affairs so that I may stay if necessary."

"Depends upon me!—can I decide?"

"If you have a right to do so."

"How can I have a right."

"If I give it to you—as my wife."

An exclamation of astonishment, yet a burning flush, either of anger or emotion, and Magdalene started from her seat.

"Have you lost your senses, Walter?"

“They never were more collected than at this moment, for it is the turning point of my life, Magdalene: sit down one minute longer, and hear me, dearest.”

And then the youth wandered away into an allegorical future which was to commence when the morrow was over. Two roads lay before him the junction of which his young life had reached, and now one must be taken, the other left: the idea was drawn from the cross roads close by, one of which led through the pleasant and romantic grounds up to our house; the other to a bleak bare common in the opposite direction. With Magdalene St. Pierre he should go forward on the first, without Magdalene his path must be the latter. She had quite sentiment enough to understand and feel his allegory, but she dared not, or would not be true to her own heart; so she said,

“You mean then that to India is one of these roads, and staying at home, and taking the first offered to you by Lord G——, is another, and you have to decide which is the pleasant one.”

“Beware, Magdalene,” said Walter Greville, in a tone she had never heard from him before—

"beware of trifling with the deepest, most sacred emotions of the human heart."

The tears that sprung to her eyes won a too easy pardon.

"But do you mean," she said, after she had heard his speech again without any allegory, that I should leave my mother, and Basil—even darling Ada, for,"—

"For me—yes, you must leave them all if you love me better."

"I shall never be so wicked!" cried Magdalene, springing to her feet. "You are altered—quite, quite altered, Walter Greville!"

"But you are not the least altered, Magdalene St. Pierre," he answered, partly smiling. "At sixteen years you are almost as much a child as you were at six, almost as unacquainted with your own heart; quite as careless of its destiny. Do you still call love "folly?" still refuse to believe that woman is ordained to love with a pure love, and fervently?"

"No, I know that; and I do love—my own family, and you too, Walter—almost as well."

"And that is all?"

"What would you expect or want?"

"Expect?—nothing. Want?—all. Yes, I will tell you Magdalene, what I do not expect, but what I do want, what I must have, or have nothing. It is a love quite different to your family love, yet not interfering with it; it is a love that would make you not love them less, but love me more. What I want is such a love as makes women act as did the disciples of old when they left all and followed Him."

The girl sat still; her hands were clasped and her eyes cast down. She was dreaming the dreams of her childhood—of heroism, of daring, suffering, labour, poverty, want—endured with constancy for something one beloved—for some who loved her.

Walter too soon broke the charm—too soon for his own object.

He took her hand and said,

"Tell me what you think, Maida?"

"I think you must have grown very selfish," she replied; but she had been thinking of some-

thing quite different, only the thoughts were still imperfect, when the youth spoke too hastily.

He had anxiously watched the bowed-down face, and he sighed when it turned upward to him, and the lips gave an answer which the heart did not second. But the girl spoke now as she had been always accustomed to speak to he boy, and forgot that he expected her to answer him as a man.

"Love is always selfish, dearest, always egotistical—let them say what they will, it is so. But you know my peculiarities, Maida, you know how, even years ago, I used to like to make things love me more than others, cling to me only—and then"—

"O yes!" involuntarily burst from her lips as she remembered Walter's pets—even that great white owl which he had recovered from a gunshot wound, and which would love to sit on his shoulder and look as affectionate as a great yellow eyed owl could look.

"Will you think then of what I say, Magdalene; will you ask your heart if it can never feel a love that will incline it to leave all for one?"

—if it can never both own and obey such a love?—will you do this to-night, dear girl?”

“No!” said Magdalene, withdrawing her hand, “I will not think of anything so foolish or so wrong!”

“Do not utter a No so hastily,” Walter replied. “I do not mind it so much now, for you do not know yourself. Tomorrow it would be more decisive; for do what you will against it, you will think of what I have said. Remember, *tomorrow*, that ‘No’ is a word which the regrets of a life have often failed to recall.”

“And is not ‘Yes’ just the same?” asked Magdalene, silyly.

“Dearest Maida!—dear, ever dear child!—but why say it?—you know how dear you have ever been to your poor Walter—I will not try to persuade you to avow the love you are not yet aware of. But commune with your heart this night; let it speak its own language, not the language of books, or false teachers; and be not frightened at what it says. Tomorrow, Magdalene, tomorrow, must decide my fate, if not yours. You have ever been the solitary star of

my existence ; if that star be now to set for me, another can never arise in its place. I never can, I never *will*, love any one else. I do not speak now as a passionate boy ; my boyhood has long passed away. There has been a great difference in the lives we spent so much together. Yours was always bright and happy ; mine, but for you and Basil, would have been utterly unhappy. You have depended on others, I have depended on myself alone. Now, dearest, if I seem to speak as an adviser, it is that I want you to think, to feel, to decide for yourself ; for, in so doing, you will decide for me also : consult your own heart first ; dismiss the trifling,—pardon me,—the levity that sometimes prevents you from understanding its dictates : remember that the whole destination and character of two earthly lives may depend on the next few hours. Tomorrow you shall tell me whose you will be—and then, Maida, your decision shall be both free and final.

“ Come, Maida, a tear shed for me shall never linger on your cheek ;—there, the dew is off the rose now. Come then, let us once more walk together through our dear wood—mine once,

almost as much as yours. Times are strangely changing with me, dearest, if not with you."

They walked on, almost in silence, through the pleasant haunts of their childhood, the wild wood paths were trodden now by the boy and girl emerging into the man and woman: her heart not quite unstirred from its soft repose—the enchanted sleep of the young maiden-heart; his heaving in emotion, such as, perhaps, is known not more than once. That emotion was not expressed in words, not even in looks; but it made the dark-grey eyes seem black as night when they were cast down on the subdued and pensive girl beside him.

And so they reached the old favourite point on the elevated woody bank that overhung the sea beneath it.

It was a small grassy promontory which they had named "Cape Look-out." There, in a fantastic beech, had Walter and Wilton conjointly—the only work, perhaps, they ever performed in harmony—made a chair of state for the Fairy Queen. It was some years old now, but it had been kept constantly repaired and in order until this year, and now it had grown rather wild.

And Walter was pleased to see it thus ; and with a smile, he placed her in it, saying, " The throne of our queen has been neglected when her most faithful subject was away."

" O !" said Magdalene, " Wilton wished to do it, only"—She stopped there, for she would not frankly say that she had wished her throne to be sustained by Walter's care alone.

" Only that you would not permit him : thank you, Maida."

" Only that his brother has taken him up so much of late."

And they sat there till the twilight grey crept on, and the clear moon came forth and poured her golden light upon the rippling wave. Beautiful exceedingly it was to be there then, and see that sight ! Beautiful, now as ever, it was to the eyes that looked upon it, yet somehow, if they felt its beauty as in days of yore, they appeared more indifferent to it. They were not glad, either one or the other, but the heart of the young man was full ; and on him lay that pre-sage of the future, which, while it points to no tangible event, weighs on the spirits, and casts a

sense of doubtfulness, even on the present possession of good or of happiness. And the girl was wrapped up in a dream ; a pensive, but not wholly unpleasant dream. Walter was not the same he had been ; and Walter was making himself unnecessarily unhappy ; he expected too much ; but then he had come back, and he should not go to India, for she had power to keep him : he had always obeyed, he would always obey her.

Dream on, vain child, your waking may not be to joy. Life is fast gliding from thee, but thou knowest it not ; beauty is passing from the earth, yet thou perceivest it not : dream on, that thy morrow will be as to-day, and much more abundant. But the destiny of years is garnered into the hours that flit by as thou dreamest.

And when their walk had ended, and their long discourse also, about things that had been, but might be no more ; and about things that never yet had existed for them, but might now be before them, they stopped under the sweeping branches of the limes, a little to the side of which were the windows of Magdalene's chamber.

There they stood, hand in hand, as they had often stood before, but in a silence that had no kindred link with any moment of the by-gone time.

Walter broke it first.

“Maida, my heart’s star,—good night, but not farewell. Think of what I have said. Question your own heart, and then let it speak to me truly.”

Her hands were pressed to his breast; with the gravity of age a blessing was breathed upon her head, and Walter and Maida parted.

CHAPTER XVII.

CALM and clear the moon, in that soft night of June, looked down upon our world ; its passionless regards mocking the passions of earthly beings.

Magdalene St. Pierre had extinguished the light in her stately old fashioned chamber ; but ere she had laid her down on the great ungirl-like bed, whereon the grander dames of by-gone generations had reposed, she stood, as was her wont, close to the window, looking out on the pet planet of the young, the happy, and the thoughtful, watching its light upon the dark masses of wood, and its silver gilt radiance resting over the fair landscape and tranquil river :—and there, just where the lime boughs terminated

abruptly only a few yards from her window—there did that clear silver light reveal another object, as moveless externally as all the rest. But the moonbeams revealed what was external only.

“Foolish Walter,” said the girl, as she turned hastily, and smiling, away. But she blushed as well as smiled, blushed as once she used not to do at proofs of Walter Greville’s devotion.

There he had been while her light burned, and there she saw him when her white figure stood against the moon-gilt glass.

“Foolish Walter,” said the girl to herself; but she thought not how far from folly were the deep, almost solemnized emotions that filled the breast of her childhood’s lover.

The white figure left the window, and the young girl lay down to rest—not quite as she used to do before then, feeling that sleep stole away that sense of happiness which filled her waking life—yet with soft dreamy thoughts of joy and sadness, so intertwined that one was not distinct from the other; dim visions of something new which she did not try to develop, passing

like dissolving views before her mind till they melted away in slumber, the slumber of happy, innocent youth, which resembles such a midsummer night—short, balmy, and refreshing.

And Walter Greville spent that midsummer night stretched upon the raised grassy top of the ice house, beneath the trees that rose in a clump at one end of the house.

A few yards space separated the two young hearts: but how great was the difference in their state!

She, the favoured child of a happy home, with all that earth could give of good around her, and the prospect of a bright future before her; with a heart just beginning to waken slowly up from the sleep of childhood; enwrapped in her family loves and first innocent affections, and shrinking from even the gentlest touch that would detach her from all she has clung to: and he, the youth left to himself, to shape his own fortune as he could; the boy who had been nursed in family discord; the loveless, and now homeless young man, who was going forth to a world of which he had never, even in fancy, con-

ceived a notion. They had loved as children love; they had been friends in youth—but now, either their future paths must blend in one, or be parted far as east from west.

Similarity of taste appears indispensable either in love or friendship; though dissimilarity of character will not interfere with either. Yet there was one question of taste upon which Walter and Magdalene differed; it was as to the power of Lord Byron's poetry. Magdalene's argument was quite feminine; she said that what was written without feeling did not make itself felt, and she argued that because that poetry did not make itself felt by her, it was written without feeling. Walter averred that it was felt by him; and then she flew off to the assertion that all that display of feeling was untrue to nature, for no one who felt such terrible things would pour out all that on paper and present it to the world; and so she undertook to predict that Collins and Gray would be more generally known than Byron and that the Giaour would not live quarter as long as the Fairy Queen.

It was, however, the age of open throats, turned

down collars, and poetic misery. To be beloved by none ; to hate every one ; to rail against the world ; to profess to carry some hidden talisman about oneself which banished joy, love, peace and fellowship with one's kind—not only affecting oneself either, but acting on the unfortunate individual who came into closer contact with that unhappy self-such, or still more desperate misery, must be the lot of all sentimentalists of that day, on whom the least shred of the Byronic mantle could be supposed to have fallen.

It was the Byronic age—an age that produced its reaction, as all things do, and we have seen the theory of universal hate and misery change into that of universal love and happiness. The generation that raved about the one produced the generation that raved about the other.

Perhaps even Walter Greville, strong, manly, sensible, and decided for action as he was, might be not a little under the influence of the poetry he admired, although he was far from imitating the sentimentality he saw. It was partly from natural temperament, it was partly owing to Lord Byron's poetry, that he had formed the

belief that if he desired the Desert to be his dwelling place, the one fair spirit who was to be his 'minister' should love the Desert as much as he loved it himself.

Strange fatuity of human minds!—the youth who had never known any love—no love of father, mother, brother, sister—none save that of the twin St. Pierres—that youth all at once claimed to be the sole, all-engrossing love of a young heart that had been filled till then with love only such as children knew. He would have all or nothing—and that half-folded heart must expand to his magic Open Sesame, and answer to his as the lips of Ruth the Moabitess spoke to the mother of her dead husband, or, if not—

A blank might follow the alternative, for a blank would be left in the life of him it referred to.

O ! foolish Walter ! your young love is slumbering tranquilly up there, and you mean that she shall awake to respond to an affection so grasping as yours. You expect the noontide warmth just as the blushing dawn begins.

And thus, beneath the pure rays of the passionless moon did the young man meditate, and with a calm, determined spirit weighed in the balance the lot which the coming day should bring him. In one scale was Magdalene St. Pierre, home, and the quiet pursuits of country life. In the other, the wide outer world—a life of action, of enterprise—it might be of adventure, but not of love : a world not to his ken, decked out in the gorgeous livery with which sanguine youth invests it, but sombre as the iron rule of an unhappy home, and the cold lessons of bitter hearted teachers had represented it to him. A future uncertain and waste as the ocean he has to traverse—a future on which he was to enter, not long emerged from boyhood, yet already weaned from love—a loveless manhood following a youth of earnest love.

Thus, while the balance yet was even, he pondered ; and thus pondering which side the scale should turn, is it wonderful that he lay there during that whole short midsummer night—the night that might be his last in the scenes that were so dear to him ? Is it wonderful that

stretched there on the grassy top of the ice house, he watched the window on which the moonbeams played so brightly? He did not know that she whom he called the star of his heart, slumbered there in unconsciousness as complete as that of the infant Ada at her side; he did not think that after all she had gone to sleep dreaming of a different future from that he presented to her for consideration, that is to say, dreaming of such a future as a very young girl ever thinks about—a future of a very few brief years—and her dream was, that Walter would be himself again, and give up the romance he had caught from Byron's poetry, and that he would obey her wishes as he had always done, and stay at home, and that they should all be as happy together for the time to come as they had been for the time that had past.

Dream on, Magdalene, while your waking lover is looking forward to the chance of going forth alone to another world than yours; thinking of leaving the dreamland of youth for the stern struggles of manhood; thinking of leaving his native clime, without a tie to the home he leaves; without a hope to impart a wish of returning.

And the morning came, as mornings do, with an aspect quite irrespective of human circumstances ; bright, laughing, joyous, when hearts are sad ; overhung with clouds when we wish all nature to rejoice with us.

Gloriously rose the sun over the dark woods ; laughingly it dashed back the fleecy clouds, and darting its first beams into the young girl's chamber, called her up as usual to welcome its rise.

How mysterious is that power which, under the name of accidents, directs the destiny of human lives !

A young girl's toilet is commonly a quick one, and Magdalene's was more than commonly so. Yet somehow on this morning it was lingered over. She generally left little Ada sleeping and went out, with Basil when he was at home, alone while he was away—before the first dew was off the earth. But this morning she lingered, and the bird and the bee were abroad long, long before her.

Had it been otherwise, had she gone out as she did almost all other mornings, she would have found Walter Greville where she had left him the

night before, she would have seen where his bed had been made all through it, and then, perhaps, the veil would have dropped from her heart, and, understanding her own she might have been able to comprehend his. That morning, by mere accident, she did not go out.

After breakfast a servant came to the library to tell her Mrs. St. Pierre wished to see her in the drawing-room.

A summons so formally sent startled Magdalene. Hastily entering the room she saw Walter Greville standing nearly in its centre, while against the wall Mrs. St. Pierre sat on a high backed, worsted-worked chair, her folded hands resting on her knee, and her head declined, as if she had been listening to what filled her with grief, that was not, perhaps, wholly unmingled with a sense of shame.

She did not say a word, but Walter hastily advancing took the girl's hand between his. His tone and manner were almost solemn.

"Magdalene, you are free to choose for yourself. Speak now and say will you be mine?"

She did not look at the speaker: she turned an almost frightened face to her mother.

It was a beautiful countenance she saw, but beautiful in an indescribable expression of pain.—Fear, hope, intense anxiety were struggling there, and through them all beamed the sweetness that nothing could remove. Her eyes of love met her daughter's, and there was a slight movement of the hands that seemed to be imploring, as she cried in that soft voice of pain—

“Or mine! my child! or mine?”

“Yours dear mother, always yours—whose else should I be?” the girl exclaimed, and snatching her hand away, she sprang across the floor, drooped down beside her mother's chair, and laid her face upon her neck.

“I knew it!” were the mother's words, and there was a wave of the hand as they were uttered.

The fear soon passed, and Magdalene knelt there, and thought that Walter would draw near and speak. She thought he had much to say, and she waited for him to come and say it.

One hand hung down, she expected him to take it. But the hand was not taken, and his voice was not heard. So she glanced backwards, half smiling, half reproaching, to where he stood.

"Where is Walter?" she said, for the room contained only themselves.

"He is gone, Magdalene, he only waited to hear what you would say. And now, my child, let this be a warning to you. Do you know this young man actually believed you were in love with him! I assure you it was frightful to hear him!—he spoke as if your whole life might be spoiled:—but do, love, be more careful in future; young men take such strange notions into their heads. He told me he had spoken to you yesterday, and asked you to answer him to day, for that he did not wish to obtain your answer without my knowledge. That was right of poor Walter certainly; but for the rest I am glad you proved to him at once that he was mistaken, and that all your nonsense as children was not to be taken in earnest."

Magdalene felt indignant at Walter; but the last allusion brought tears to her eyes.

She resolved to convince him both of his mistake and her displeasure. She would not go into the wood all that day nor the next, for fear of meeting him. But there was no fear of her

meeting Walter there, nor elsewhere; and days and years might pass on, and still the question of Magdalene's heart, — "Where is Walter?" could be only answered as her mother had answered it when she sprang from his side—"he is gone."

Once more came a letter from Walter Greville. Such epistles had not been uncommon; they had begun as soon as a tolerably fair round hand writing had been attained. But this letter, if more tender, was less passionate than the hasty scraps of more boyish times.

"Magdalene," it said, "your old friend writes the farewell he could not—would not speak. To him you are Maida no more. To-morrow I sail for India. A new life is before me; may yours continue what it has ever been—as bright, as pure, as happy, as innocent.

"I can ask nothing more of Heaven for you than that what has been may still be yours. Will it be so, Maida?—Its brightness, its happiness may go, but not its goodness, not its purity. Surely the angels will watch over that, for I cannot believe you ever will be but

what you are. Yet—only and ever beloved, that precocious wisdom which you have sometimes imputed to me causes me a strange fear when I think of your future. You know the pretty Irish melody,

“The Boat was still there but the waters were gone.”

“Do not think me a prophet of ill,—but one who knows you so well, who has loved you so well, must fear for you.

“Will you never, Magdalene, be but what you have been, but what you are now; will such a heart as yours never require anything beyond its home loves? It may not—you now are sure it will not—but will these home loves always abide with it? and if not—dearest girl, my heart aches at the thought. Yes, Magdalene, I could wish you a quick, even if a cruel death, rather than a life—if life it could be called—of heart-isolation;—affections vivid as yours, living on to the end, but living

“ ‘ Like things within the cold rock found,
Alive when all's congealed around.’

“Be not angry, my still beloved. You know

the old folks used to say, Master Walter was wise beyond his years. Thought has made me so : and I believe that what I say now must often be the state of feeling, loving, affectionate woman, when she has made no home for such a heart beyond the circle of her first natural affections.

“ In the common course of things a change must come in this circle.

“ Dear Magdalene, I have spoken my fear. I leave you in the full possession of all your heart desires and loves—I leave you surrounded with blessings so that there seems no room for any one I could call down to add to your store:—and yet I fear for you. To be left alone, with a heart so warm and tender, a fancy so bright, an imagination that can give exquisite colouring to joy, and poignancy to pain, would be to you indescribably miserable.

“ You will not think that in aught I now say one selfish consideration mingles. That species of selfishness which you imputed to me when we last spoke together, would prevent me from saying one word that might cause you to waver, in my case, in the decision you so promptly and decisively-

ly expressed : no, Magdalene, I speak for yourself alone. It seems strange to warn one so young, so bright, lovely, and full of bliss, to beware of isolation of heart. Perhaps it is because such is my own lot that I dread lest it should ever become yours.

“And now, star of my heart, farewell—it is a pang—one more pang, to write the word,—and I thought the worst was over, when from the coach top I looked back for the last time over our dear wood.

“Maida, what I have said to you in that enchanted wood, where still your young heart seems lulled in repose like that of the Sleeping Beauty in hers, was true—I never have loved, and never can love any one but you. And yet farewell:—the star of my boyhood—the one lone star of my solitary youth, has set for me—yet still it will shine, though faint and afar, upon me.

“Distinct, but distant, clear, but oh! how cold”

—I shall see its image, and learn to hope it has arisen on some more favoured and some more worthy, but not more devoted heart. I do not believe what I heard after I left you, that Fitzroy Wilton might be that man.

“Will the last link that bound me to my Maida, be severed when this letter parts from me? I feel it will be so, and loiter over it. No—while I say farewell—a last, a final farewell—her image cannot part from me.

“ ‘ But though afar, but though afar,
Thou wilt be with me still,
When morning’s star, and evening’s star,
Gleam o’er the western hill.’ ”

Mrs. St. Pierre read the letter as well as her daughter, and she wept over it, and said it was very pretty, and she was very sorry for young Greville, and hoped it would be a warning to Magdalene to be more careful in future. And then she looked at the girl, and added—“ Well, my child, do not let it torment you, it cannot be helped now. Walter was going out to India at all events. But I do not think he ought to frighten you thus.”

And she folded the letter and laid it on the table, saying, that after all it was—as indeed was the fact—very romantic and sentimental.

“ May I keep it, mama ? ”

“ Of course, dear, if you like ; but I don’t see

any good it can do you—though it is very prettily written—quite poetic.”

And Magdalene St. Pierre laid up the letter. And she read it again—on what occasion !

I write all this in the third person; for it is awkward to relate such things of oneself. Perhaps I may get more hardened as I go on further in my history.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I BELIEVE that the first epoch of woman's life is to her what the second epoch of man's is usually to him :—her heart history commences sooner, and ends sooner. The essence of life is, for her, very often drawn into a small compass, what remains afterwards may be wholesome and pleasant enough—but the aroma is gone.

Thus there was now a difference between my twin brother and myself.

The morning of our life-day had been too bright, too unshadowed to last. The shadows were coming over it now. In my brother's case thought and study seemed to have sooner brought some of these shadows over the happy hearted lightness of earlier days.

In my own case I began indistinctly to feel, although even to my dual soul I would not express the feeling, that I was not quite the same I had been. I did not know whether the change was by means of something lost or something acquired, but a change was in me. And I was sorry for it. I missed my former self. I felt as if I wanted something that was gone from me; nothing external, yet something so real that when I sat on the felled tree or walked alone in the wood, I often stretched forth my hands as if to catch the soaring away bird, and cried aloud "Come back to me! come back!" crying after the young spirit that I had lost. "Silly little thing," as the Highlanders called me—how much more did I deserve the character when I acted thus than when I went to a ball with one black shoe and one blue one; and consented to dance with one partner after just refusing another.

Was it the first innocent unconsciousness of childhood that had left me? I know not—even yet: but if it were so no bad spirit had entered into the place that was left empty.

I said none, and yet I recollect there was; it

was the least degree of discontent ; what I had never known before, and which therefore added to the sense of heart-change which I felt without being able to define or explain. I became displeased with Walter Greville. I believed he had done me an injury by talking to me as he did, by writing to me as he did ; by going away as he did.

And then—O ! that filled up my portion of self-torment ; there was a degree, a very small degree of—no, I will not say of displeasure, but the least sense in the world of separation between me and our mother. What was it that for the first time seemed to pass between my love and her ? There was something there ; and ever and anon the shade took Walter's form, and seemed to stand looking at me with his eyes, and saying, " Wilt thou be mine ? " and then her eyes said again " or mine, my child, or mine ? "

Then came Basil, my twin soul, and our arms twined round each other, and we walked our own dear walks, and talked as the wood-children used to talk, and I forgot that something was gone from me, and I forget that I was not the

same I had been, and I saw no more the shade between my home loves and myself.

And all the time, to those who knew our circumstances more correctly than we did, there were more than mind-shadows drifting around us, or gathering over us. Clouds lowered in our once sunny horizon; our bright life-day was indeed being over-cast; we felt the influence of the coming clouds, but we saw not that they were coming.

Our father's labourers looked at us with pity, and his steward's family with wonder: but we knew not why. And our mother's voice took a tone of sadness; yet grew more fond, more patient; her consultations with our father were longer, and to him more irritating. He was more frequently obliged to hear unpleasant things; and after these consultations she would look so harassed, and say to us that she could not understand the state of affairs, but she thought that our father was ill-used by every one.

All this made Basil grave and thoughtful, and as he looked round on his ancestral domain, there was an expression in his dark serious eye that was unlike its former glance.

Indeed the period of Walter's departure was to be that of a life-crisis for us all. We were not yet passing from happiness to unhappiness, but we had passed from thoughtlessness to thought. To my twin brother I clung more tenderly than I had ever done; we felt our mutual tenderness more; I felt my own want of it to be greater. A heart that has been ever so lightly shaken from its old resting place, re-settles to it more deeply than before.

The change of mind, of heart, and of person with the young, is generally simultaneous. The tint of the rose, both on heart and cheek, grows pale together; the laughter of the eyes passes into a smile of softer thoughtfulness when meditation takes the place of mirth. I felt all this was so when the very hair that poor Walter used to admire, lost its natural freedom, and was twisted up into a bow on my head,—turned up for the first time: and when I was a child, turned-up hair was synonymous with opening womanhood. I felt it, and would fain have shrunk back into what I had been.

Yet pensiveness is a pleasure to youth, the

soft dreamy pensiveness of sweet sixteen is more delightful than careless merriment. The seat on the felled tree was very pleasant, and the autumn song of the robin was in unison with the poetic musings of the girl and boy who sat there; and still, as she mused, a vision of some not distant day would flit across her fancy, when another form should sit there with them, and if Walter Greville had been wrong, he should be forgiven, and if he had been wronged, atonement should be made. For that a few months would bring him back, appeared to be certain.

Was then this poetic shadowing of our young minds a forecasting of the tempest that was so soon and so suddenly to sweep over them? No, the roseate coloured summer cloud is no warning of the thunder storm.

We had not yet grown too old to love stubble fields and blackberry hedges. How pleasant is a ramble through such fields on a September afternoon; we liked to meet there the little bare-footed urchins whose round red cheeks were dyed black with the juice of the only fruit they knew, and then exchange for their cups of berries the

fine peaches, nectarines and figs with which the walls of our garden were overladen. We made the poor children believe that they conferred a favour, and we knew that we gave them a treat.

It is a common adjunct to an Irish thanksgiving to say,—even to the great and rich,—“God send that ye may never want,” and one day, when these words had been said to us by older and wiser people, we fancied there was a look of pity and of enquiry in the eyes of the speakers. But we returned from our blackberry gathering, and with arms twined round each other’s neck, mounted the little eminence near the house just as we had often done when tiny children, Basil trying to draw me up, and I trying to draw him down ; and our laugh was as light as ever.

Thus the moment found the twins that was to separate for ever the past from the future of their lives. The moment after which the names and characters of Boy and Girl were to be left behind in the lost fairy land of their previous existence, and man and woman were to be stamped upon brows bent to meet the stern realities of a still unknown world.

Against the side of this eminence was the most charming and uncommon greenhouse that I believe ever was seen. It was so contrived that the roof was covered over with tall flowering shrubs, and the glass projected in a semi-circle from the overhanging bank which formed the back of the house, and was faced inside with pieces of rock and sparkling stones; while a spring in that bank supplied a beautiful well, overhung with the most exquisitely green ferns, and surrounded by spars and pebbles that shone among them. It was both a grotto and well, scooped into an arch, from which crystalized things were made to hang as in caverns. The lauristinus that grew at each side I see before me now, with its leaves of hot-house green, and its blossoms so delicately white, the fine lady of its tribe, so unlike its hardy out-of-door sisters.

This was my own greenhouse, and Basil drew me into it, and we stood leaning over the well.

"And there," he said, looking down into it, "and there, Magda, fell the only tears of sorrow you ever remember to have shed."

I almost started at the words—why did he say that?

"I mean for the drowned robins, that fell from their nest in the laurestinus. I remember your telling us once that you had never cried from real sorrow before." I knew that poor Walter had made up the "us," and I felt that Basil was looking at me as if he would ask had I ever shed tears of sorrow since. I thought I had not. But there are nooks and corners of the heart no one likes another, however dear, to look into. So I replied evasively—

"People say there is sorrow in the world, but they say also that we do not know what the world is, so I suppose our knowledge of one will bring us a knowledge of the other. But I think it is so strange to hear persons talk of an evil world and of a false and cruel world, just as if they were not a part of the world themselves."

"Like the family of poor Walter's step-father, dear, who each will tell you there never was so miserably conducted a set of beings; but if you hint that the fault may partly lie in the individual who speaks to you, you will have a burst of anger in return.

"For my part, Basil, I can by no means

think so badly of this strange thing they call the world; our father says I must go into the world, which clearly shews I am not in it yet, but I am resolved to appear well in it, and to find it a very kind, gentle, well-behaved thing."

"You must not go into it with two odd shoes, then, nor run your head against every crazy Highland"—

"Basil, come here, come here!"

I had run to the door to escape a constant subject of teasing, but what I saw from it made me call him to look also.

The windows and doors of the house were all shut, with the exception of one which was wide open in one of the turrets that abutted from the wing of the mansion before us. Up to this window a long ladder had been placed, as it appeared by a workman who had left it there; but just as I looked from the greenhouse door a man ran out of the shelter of the trees, mounted the ladder, and crept in at the window. That he was not the workman his long coat and stout stick made evident. No sooner had he got fairly in than a young lad, who was maintained

by us, and who belonged to that class most inappropriately named "Innocents" in Ireland, stepped from the screen of the projecting turret, raised the ladder on his shoulder, and drew it from the wall.

Then stepping about midway between us and the house, he pulled off his rabbit skin cap, and making an obsequious bow to the great bull dog head that was projected from the window, he began in his usual "innocent" way of talking,

"The top of the morning to your honour's honour, and it's mighty pretty you look up there. You'll like your lodging afore the morning I'm thinking, and it's welcome to it you are. Sure it's yourself that deserves it; and you giving the quality lodgings for nothing at all at all; not so much as a thank you. May be you'll be taking a fancy to a round of salt beef and a bottle of wine? By all manner of means; just ring the bell, and the servants will bring it to you with all the pleasure in life, the more by token that there's no bell in the room. And if it's after taking a walk you'd be, sure its

mighty pleasant about here, and we're quite agreeable if you'll just step down to us."

"Barney!" cried Basil, "what are you about? and who is that man up there?"

"Troth then, so p'lease your young Honour, I havn't made acquaintance with him yet, seeing he's one as comes after the quality folk. He's a great man entirely, and own servant to the King that's up in Lunnun."

"What folly!" said Basil, but he turned pale, and walking hastily to the two servant men who were coming up, repeated his question.—"It is the bailiff, sir, that has been after the master all day; and Barney decoyed him up there while master was getting out of the house. The door of the turret is fastened up, so he is safe enough up there now that the ladder is away."

With sickening hearts we hurried to the hall door and reached it precisely as it was thrown open, and our father, rushing down the steps, met the horse that a groom led out, and waving his hand to us galloped out of sight.

May peace be with him! In "Our Own Story" he need not mingle again.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was a wild October night. The full moon seemed to drive through a rack of cloud, like a rudderless ship in a dark sea through foaming waves. The wind was high, but it blew on the other side of the house, so that though the bedroom window was wide open, I could kneel up in the great window seat and look up on that strange sky.

At one moment the stately room was involved in darkness ; at another the moonlight fell, fitful and shadowy, over the marble painted wainscoting, the tall bed with its heavy blue silk curtains, the tapestry-covered furniture, and the portraits of two proud looking ancestors, whose

eyes seemed to regard me with wonder. And wherever the moonlight fell it shewed a small white paper patch on every article, bearing the word 'Lot' in roman characters, and a number following the word.

And the white figure that knelt in that seat with arms resting on the sill of the open window, with hair flowing wildly out on the October wind, and eyes enquiringly fixed on the stormy sky, was the same which had stood there on that night of the leafy month of June, when the blue heavens were as still and calm as her own heart; when the pure clear moon walked through them in brightness as untroubled and cloudless as her own happy life.

The lime trees heaved their mighty forms in the night wind, and tossed up the long branches that swept the very spot where Walter Greville had stood, looking up at the moon-gilt window with a world of emotions within his mind that were little accordant with a scene so soft and still.

Then, that same figure had stood there in happy, dreaming thoughtfulness, and had turned

with a blush and a smile from "foolish Walter," and continued her pleasant dream. Now her up-raised face was directed to the struggling moon ; never did believer in astrology regard it with more anxiety, yet with a gaze of more apparent devotion.

A dark cloud was over it, but bravely, like sanguine, hopeful spirits, its rays struggled with the gloom. Now there was light, now shade cast over the room ; now the moon conquered, and now the cloud.

I had watched the contest long ; I said to myself, " If the moon gets free from that dark cloud then shall our life be free and bright and happy as ever."

And the great cloud passed: the moon was free ; my room was light, and the moonshine was on my face. I clapped my hands and laughed for joy.

The joy soon ended. The light passed from the room, and the moonshine from the gladdened face. The great cloud had passed ; but lo ! there was another, and another, and another ; great and small, lighter or darker ; on

and on they came; and the moon struggled, and got free, and was eclipsed, and struggled again.

So it continued. An interval of brightness followed by gloom; a moment of freedom, and a struggle with difficulty: one moment the moon shone bright, the next, a cloud swept over it.

“Not so! not so!” cried the frantic heart of the cloud watcher. “O! let it not be so with me in life! Let life be short, but let it be bright and happy still!”

Daring prayer. And to be unanswered. The girl who prayed it was to “drie her weird:” that moon was to her an omen then.

Proud, passionate child! undisciplined and untrained as the wild ass's colt—had your prayer that night been different you might out of weakness have been made strong; and then, buckling on beneath your maiden garb an armour of proof, even you might have gone forth to the true battle of life—to its more deadly conflict, or to its petty harassing skirmishes; to its long, wearying encampments, where patience must have her perfect work. A child as yet in ignorance of

all that lay before you, you might have gone forth from the cradle of a happy youth, a pilgrim warrior, bearing on your brow the device of your holy order, the outward sign of your inner and dedicated life.

But seldom is the spirit that for sixteen years and a half has dwelt upon an earth which for it was strewn with roses, found ready for the unexpected call that bids it go and fulfil its vocation in the life into which it was sent. Too long removed from heaven, too little inured to earth, it is ill prepared to obey the call that bids it to go and run with patience the race set before it; whether that race is to be run in a waste, howling wilderness, or in shady and pleasant places: on the open sunburned plain where it must walk in robes of state before the eyes of men; or along the toilsome, rough, uphill, and neglected road where every step is marked by the sweat of the brow.

How little knew I of all this on that October night, the remembrance of which, it seems to me, I must take with me even beyond the grave. That wild sky, that driving moon, the tossing

lime boughs—the thoughts that were driven about more wildly still, and the heart which was tossed with a ruder tempest. Poor thing—I feel for it myself now ! Like a wild bird newly caught and thrust into a cage too narrow for it, when it had too long known freedom to be tame, it battered its own breast against the wires in impotent efforts to escape ; incapable of understanding that it must either sit still on the perch, and learn to sing songs in captivity, or burst its own poor heart instead of its prison bars.

And now the tall heads of the great old trees were tossed wildly about, and the wind caught the girl's long hair, and lifted it up and flung it back over her face.

A soft murmur from the bed drew me to it ; the cold wind which only heightened the flush that mental agitation brought then, as it always has done since, to my cheek, was blowing too cold on my slumbering foster-child, my darling little Ada.

It was not

“ That holy thing, an elder sister's love,”

I felt for that beautiful child. Years had passed

before I understood the love I felt, before I knew why I called myself her foster-mother. It was because as a child myself, I had held her in my arms at baptism ; it was because she was a nursling of Heaven that I felt myself her foster-mother.

But now my thoughts were all of earth ; and as I leaned over the slumbering cherub, her long bright hair floating loose over her dimpled shoulder, and the dark, long eye-lash shading her cheek of rose, I burst into an agony of grief. Was she too the heir of degradation ? I stretched my arms over her, I said aloud that I would shield her from what was to fall on myself.

My passion awoke the child ; she raised up one little arm, put it round my neck, drew down my face to hers, and saying only the name that Walter had taught her—"Maida ;" she fell asleep again, holding, me there.

There crept from the clasp of that little arm an influence to my heart. The slumbering child taught me more than the storm-driven moon ; love, confidence, and repose. And Ada and I slept together. Slept, when the moonshine

streamed in on the catalogued furniture around us; slept, too, when the moon was lost in the storm-cloud. A young rebel spirit chafed itself to rest.

I had seen the pale beautiful countenance of my twin brother wear that look which had never been there before, and which, strange to say, never altogether left it again. I can best describe it by a borrowed, and a favourite expression —“the air of one superior to his fate.”

I had seen our sweet, still youthful seeming mother standing in the very centre of her splendid drawing-room, its mirrored walls reflecting her figure, its gaily painted ceiling contrasting with it; while rough, awkwardly respectful men were noting down on paper the catalogue of our family possessions. I had seen that heart-stricken look; the meek, loving gaze of her unconsciously help-seeking eyes, directed to her son, the heir—of what?

And now we moved, stealthily as intruders do, about our own beloved home, for in our stately hall even the figures of our forefathers wore a patch of white to show they were set forth in an execution sale bill.

And our library, the treasure-house of our childhood and youth! there all our dear old comrades were ticketed also.

And through the many apartments, and the long galleries, and haunted passages that echoed to our running feet and laughing voices, I passed to and fro with heavy steps and a throbbing heart. I could not rest, I could not cease to move about the strangely still, yet strangely disordered house, looking with a dull and mystified gaze at all familiar objects, from the fine Indian cabinets to the least article of domestic use, all bearing that mysterious little label, "Lot 1, Lot 2," and thus on. I never had seen nor heard of such a thing, and the fact thus announced was almost beyond my comprehension.

And now I thought myself upon the borders of a long unknown world; I could see nothing before me, and felt afraid to penetrate the fog-land that lay around us. What I was to be, what I was to do, I knew not.

Our wood was silent; the wood nymph and her attendant spirits seemed to have already quitted their haunts for ever; or if the slow feet

of her who used to be the fairy queen were wandering there, so changed were all things now, that instead of the joyous call of a young voice making her leap forward towards it with gladness, the rustle of a bird's wing would cause her to fly in terror lest she should meet any human eye, and the very murmur of the wind among the trees inspired her with the dread of human tongues.

Our mother would see no one, and we willingly cut ourselves off from all we had known, and from Wilton more especially.

O! there lie such depths of woe in a young blighted spirit!
Manhood rears a haughty front, and age hath done with tears;
But youth bows down to misery, in amaze
At the dark cloud o'ershadowing its young days.

The morning following that scene with the moon, which was never to be forgotten by me, I stood gazing round the hall which I had decorated with so much delight for the festival that was to do honour to poor Grace Fleetwood. It was not of her, nor of our tutor I was thinking; I did not reflect either on her fate, nor on his wise lessons. I was looking at the pictures of

our ancestors, and especially at that lady in the Spanish hat and the moss rose in her black velvet boddice, which I was said to resemble, and fancying that they had never looked stately and proud and forbidding till now, when all at once I heard the words—"Come sister," and then I saw that Basil had been beside me.

With his arm twined round me we entered the great drawing-room, where, because it was now the most solitary part of the house, our mother chiefly remained. We found her, as Basil perhaps knew we should do, sitting at a table that was covered with papers, parchments, account books, bills, and letters—she, so unused even to look at such things—the nursling of ease, and refinement, the child-hearted woman, suddenly awakened to the necessity of both thought and action—there she sat, secluded in the elegant and now mournful mansion that had ceased to be hers, reluctant to reveal to her children,—still more so to her son, the ruin of his prospects; and, with a tear on her sweet pale face, trying to calculate if it would be possible for us to live on what remained of our father's property.

She had been given to understand by the lawyers who had conducted the more than thirty years' Chancery suit which had been inherited with these estates, that one of them of about £800 a year in value, would remain to us. An income, which not very long afterwards would have been comparative wealth, now appeared the depth of poverty; and she sat, in sorrow and doubt, puzzling her brains over unintelligible accounts and statements, trying thus to ascertain if it might be possible to live on the income of eight-hundred a year.

Her twins came gently in, and the face they saw then never left their recollection.

Basil came up to the back of her chair, and leaning forward pressed his lips upon her fair smooth brow, now weary with care.

"Mother, let us help you. Let us make out together what may be left for us to live upon, and then let us all try to live upon it happily and well."

The mother's tears flowed down, but her brow was brightened by a smile. Her son had divined what she shrank from telling him; and she

had got what she required—sympathy and help. It is seldom these go together: those who can give us help often cannot, or will not, give us sympathy: and those who sympathise most with us can frequently help us the least.

Our mother's easily changed mind was soon beguiled of half its grief, and though they did not make out much from the innumerable papers before them, she became an easy convert to her young son's belief that they *could* manage to live, and that they ought to live happily.

"But let us leave this place at once," I cried—"O! let us go anywhere rather than stay in this dear old place, and feel that its very trees witness our degradation!"

"Degradation!" Basil echoed, turning his eyes upon me with a look which I felt.

"People regard us with pity, or scorn," I added.

"We must leave our home whether we like it or not, my love," said our mother, "but I hope you will never meet with scorn, in any place."

"Wilton," I said, with a heaving breast, "Wilton"—

"Ah!" interrupted Basil smiling, "it is conscience makes you fear him. You think he will retaliate for the way you treated him. But Wilton has got his commission—depend upon it, dear, that he is thinking more of his new uniform than of us. If poor Walter, indeed"—

"Oh! he at least did not know this!" I cried; "he, at least, shall never know it," and with a burst of irrepressible emotion I turned to leave the room.

"Poor child!" sighed our mother, looking up at her son, "It is hard for her to bear this—just at the opening of life—and she so unsuited to struggle with any trial;—so thoughtless and ignorant of everything in the world. What can we do for her, Basil? we must try and support her. Her spirits may be utterly broken."

"We are both learning, dear mother," the boy answered, with a smile that though sorrowful was full of meaning. "We are twin-souls, you know, and what one learns the other must learn."

This speech was meant for me. Our mother thought I had gone, but the long room was not

crossed, and I heard what she said, and what he answered.

And it was so. The twins were both learning. The world was to be their only school ; and life their teacher.

CHAPTER XX.

THE home of the St. Pierres was to be desolate, as inhabited by strangers. More pleasant would it have been to me to think the bittern was to cry in the pleasant places of our childhood, and the bat and the owl to lodge in the beautiful mansion of our youth; better to have seen it moulder into ruin, than to know it was inhabited, not by strangers only, but by the attorney who had grown great by the ruin of its possessors. The "upstarts" and the "mushrooms" were the titles given to them by the poor and indignant tenantry. But the thirty years' Chancery suit was over, and such was its result. We did not think of seeking a home elsewhere, but it was

necessary to get a house. Our mother saw in a newspaper "a genteel villa residence to be let furnished, in the vicinity of Dublin, for three months certain." The rent per annum was just the fourth of her calculated income ; but she had never paid rent in her life, and she had only heard of the difficulty of receiving, not of paying it. And so the villa residence was taken for three months certain.

"The dear old place" was to be left. The evening before that I went out to the high walk. I walked down it alone. The grass had grown over the beaten path again, and the leaves from the fairy elm were lying over the spot where I had once jumped upon Walter's shadow.

I stood and looked on the felled tree, but I did not sit down on it. Some ivy was creeping up its side, and I plucked a leaf and put it in my breast. Then I turned, and ran very quickly away.

I ran up against Basil, who put out his hands and stopped me.

"Magdalene !" he said, in a tone of surprise, as if he thought my light spirits had returned ;

but when he looked at my eyes he said in another manner, "Are you frightened, dear? You have not seen a ghost?"

"Yes, brother!—the ghost of our lost happiness!"—and I fell on his neck and wept.

"I have been looking for you dear," said he quietly. "you leave me too much alone, Magda, I wanted you to take a walk with me: one, one last walk."

I heard his voice choking, I felt reproved, and lifted up my head.

"Yes, yes, let us come together, that will be better, Basil, I can bear it then."

"And let us take little Ada too, she belongs to *us*, we have her to care for now, you know sister."

I looked at my brother, and understood his meaning; we had already a charge—Ada was not to be our plaything only.

The happy laughing thing was found, and holding each a hand, we set out on our last walk in our beloved and beautiful wood; beautiful still, in its golden glory, and its deep autumnal silence: Ada prattling nonsense and laughing

between us, and at each side of her a brother and sister's heart filled to bursting with such grief as she perhaps could never know, since a life such as ours had been was not to be hers.

Children standing on life's threshold, we fancied we had already penetrated far within it, and looked with compassionate wonder on the infantile gaiety and innocence of our little one, thinking whether she would ever be as wise and as sad, and know as much of the world as we did.

We were going straight on to the bower of the fairy queen. I had avoided going there, but now I went on as if sailing up to a rock on which I must strike. Perhaps even my dual soul did not penetrate fully into the thoughts that had kept me from it.

And now we were on that overhanging promontory again; but the fairies had ceased their revels; the throne of their queen in the beech tree had assumed a forlorn appearance. Basil placed me there, he wished me to sit in it; I did so, and some brown, dry, withered leaves fell down on my head. The crown was ominous.

I gathered them off, and held them in my hand to Basil ; a tear standing in my eye.

"We must not be so sentimental now, sister," he said, looking away, and comprehending, as if I had spoken, what augury I drew from the dry leaves. It was one remarkable circumstance between us, and on his side more than mine, that in matters of feeling, of sentiment, of joy, or of sorrow, there seemed to be communion without the intervention of words.

And we sat on that woody cliff, where so many, many light-winged hours had been passed, and we looked round in silence with a lingering gaze of parting love. There every spot recalled something. There Walter used to lie, and there Wilton would sit, and there in the curved eccentric boughs of the oak, Basil used to stretch himself out in curves and lines as fantastic, and often read aloud as he lay there.

And now the twin children sat there alone ; at times looking into each other's eyes, speaking without words ; and then looking out seaward. The sea was to them the future.

From a long silent gaze on that now gloomy

sea, over which in the distance the shadows of evening were falling, we turned to look at each other, and, with an irrepressible cry, I fell on my brother's neck.

"Basil! O! my brother!"

"Dear, dear sister!"

Hysterica sobs and tears burst forth. It was the first free vent of a passionate—an angry spirit. Pride, passion, tenderness, regret, fondness, and fear, all burst out in that bitter cry—"Basil! brother!" It implored help; it demanded comfort; it uttered a deep but unreasonable sense of wrong. Wrong? yes, there was the root of the evil—I felt as if Providence had wronged me. Foolish child, as well as erring! I believed I did not merit to suffer thus. I could not understand why the innocent, the good, should suffer, and the unjust, the crafty, and cruel, should prosper. And then that strange sense of shame—a first shame—a sense of what I called our degradation—pressed so hard on a young, high spirit.

My brother lifted up my head; he strove to look under my drooping eyelids; he put back my disordered hair, and kissed the tears from

my face. He cleared his husky voice, and then he said,

"Listen to me, Magdalene, I want to speak to you. You did not know our tutor, dear, quite as well as I did, yet it is only now that I begin to know, at least to understand him properly. He is dead and buried, yet now he seems to talk to me, and I comprehend his meaning. I suppose the longer I live, and the more I know of life, the more I shall understand him. To such a boy as I was then, he was often unintelligible; but to a man he will not be so." And Basil laid an emphasis on the word "man," as if a few weeks had removed the youth of sixteen years and five months old, from boyhood to manhood.

"I remember now, sister, how our tutor used to tell me that this life is but the school time of the human spirit, and that in this preparatory state that spirit is to be taught, and trained, and disciplined for its real destination.

"Now, dearest Magda, if this be so, are not we only beginning to take our first lesson in this school of discipline. Sister, tell me then, shall

we begin this school-time of our spirits together? —as we have begun our mortal life together, let us begin now this spiritual life, and set before ourselves some higher and nobler end than we have ever yet lived for. Our purely happy life has been spent for ourselves: its happiness blessed, and pure, and beautiful as it was, was after all only an animal happiness. And if we are to begin our mental, our spiritual school-time, let it be, dearest, by recollecting that he who ruleth his spirit is greater than he who taketh a city.”

“There,” I cried, lifting up my head, “it is over now, I will be weak no longer.” I sat down on the grass at my brother’s feet, and leaned my head, throbbing from agitation, against his knees. “Yes, brother, I will be strong,—only never let me sit on the throne again,—there,—I am not going to cry. No, I am resolved now; I will submit to our fate, whatever it may be; after all it will be a joint one. What I suffer, you must suffer. What you can bear, I will bear. I shall not be *alone*.”

“Have you as much strength of will as you seem to suppose, Magdalene?” asked Basil,

without noticing the emphasis on the word *alone*.

"I don't know; I don't even know what strength of will signifies. It appears to me when I look back over our life, as if it had always run on like that river, without my ever meeting anything to make me reflect on its course. And now it reminds me of that exhibition you know we went to see, where all was so light and lovely, and all at once a dark, thick curtain dropped suddenly down, and one could see no more, and there was nothing around to care for, or make us wish to stay longer."

"And whom do you think of most, and feel most for, when you reflect thus, my sister?"

"Myself," I murmured, and hid my face in my hands. That was indeed a moment of shame. I looked into my own heart perhaps for the first time.

"Our mother!—our poor mother! We ought not to let her see that we suffer so much," I cried.

"You are learning, Magdalene; the school time of the spirit is beginning," said Basil, smi-

ling a mournful smile. "No, love, we will keep all that to ourselves—if we *do* suffer." And his pale cheek and serious eyes bore witness as he spoke to a sensitiveness of feeling far beyond the passionate emotions of his twin sister.

I felt the beauty of the mind which was now developing itself, and within my own heart I cried—

"I will hide self! I will bury it."

Did a girl who wanted yet some months for the completion of her seventeenth year, understand what she meant? Did she perceive the long perspective of a life which the performance of such a resolution would open out? No, such a prospect would have terrified her more than that of the realization of her childish vision of poverty.

Yet such a resolution has been made; and even kept in the letter—but alas! it may at last have been found that self was buried in the heart that made it, and sacrifices were offered to it there; for it was disguised in the images of what was loved.

It is so easy to deceive oneself on the point of

unselfishness. The disappointed hearts which feel and complain that their sacrifices on the shrine of affection have been lightly esteemed, are not aware that self was really concealed in the objects to which they offered. They loved, and they offered to their love: and when an offering was not made in answer, the gall of bitterness dropped into the hearts that were deemed unselfish.

Up came little Ada as I still sat on the grass, and climbing a small hillock showered a lapful of red berries and leaves over me; then seeing the trace of tears, she twined her little arms round my neck, asking why Maida cried, and telling Maida she must be good and not cry again.

“And Maida shan’t go to Dublin; to great, big, nasty Dublin. Me will make a little carriage and draw Maida back here again, when me is old.”

And Ada wiped away her foster-mother’s tears with her white frock, and talked of what she would do when she was old; and the sorrowful twins were cheated into smiles, and cares-

sed the blooming, beautiful thing : and I sighed to think she might have been my legitimate successor on the Fairy Throne.

But her poor foster-mother's tears might flow on unkissed away, long, long after all tears had been wiped away from darling Ada's rosy face.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next day we were to have taken our departure. But that night I was wakened from sleep—sleep no longer grudged to forgetfulness—by the restless tossing and moaning of the child. I laid her uneasy head upon my arm, and caressing the silken curls, strove to lull her to rest as I used to do in her infancy. She would not rest. I rose and got a light, and the flushed cheeks, the open, piteous eyes of the darling terrified me. I had never seen illness, and knew not what it was ; but my brother was my resource in all difficulty, and I went for him.

“Ada is ill,” was all he could say, “go you, Magdalene, and call our mother ; she will be less alarmed to see you than me.”

And our mother came; but her help was in vain; and then the doctor came, and he, too, helped in vain. The child had got a fever which was to burn itself out.

Darling babe! through all her ravings she was pitying Maida; rubbing my cheeks with her burning hands, and telling me not to cry, for she would not let me go away. Sometimes she addressed Walter and his great dog, the Juno that had found her at a time she did not recollect; and then she would call Basil and desire him not to let Walter make Maida cry.

At other times she would extend her little hands to each, saying there was some alms, some charity for us, as if she took us for the beggars who were often feasted at our door: and then she would begin her prayers, folding her hands as if she knew what she was about. Or with her infantile lisp she would repeat the only verse of that hymn of Watts' I ever let her learn:

"There is beyond the sky
A Heaven of joy and love,
And holy children when they die
Go to that world above."

And then the few servants who were with us

still—the attached few who remained out of all the crew of idlers and feasters—looked at her as she lay, and said they had always thought the child too beautiful and too good to live, for she was more like an angel come out of heaven than a child of this world.

One day, when she was at the worst, I had gone down to the servants' hall for something that was wanted. It was built in the side court, but connected with the rest of the house by a long stone passage.

At the upper end of this passage was a door, which would certainly be called a postern door in a romance. It was one that was rarely used, and therefore a knocking which I heard at it, as if some one were knocking with the handle of a whip, was somewhat remarkable, and caused me hastily to open it myself, without waiting to look for a servant ; I supposed it was the doctor.

To my utter surprise there was Mr. Fitzroy Wilton, holding his horse's bridle in one hand and his whip in the other. He started when I opened this back door, and I did so on seeing almost the last person I should have thought of

seeing at such a place; but he coloured very highly, and I do not think I coloured at all.

"I—I really beg your pardon," he began at once, "but I found—that is I thought it would cause less disturbance if I enquired at this door for Mrs. St. Pierre, and—and your little sister—The large knocker on the hall door is so noisy"—he concluded in embarrassment.

I looked at him in silence; but gradually I saw his meaning and his motive; I felt the good nature which led him to wish to know about us, and the delicacy that prevented him from openly enquiring; and I held out my hand, forgetting that poor Ada had torn the sleeve of my pink and white muslin dress nearly from top to bottom, so that the whole arm was bare. I drew it back, and the recollection of the odd shoes, which had been talked of so much in the ball room, and of the reputation which Mr. Fitzroy possessed as an "exquisite," caused me to blush as I arranged the torn covering over my arm.

"Will you not allow me to shake hands with you, Miss St Pierre, perhaps for the last time?" he said.

I gave him my hand, torn sleeve and all; but I could not say a word in reply to his questions.

I drew back with a choking sensation.

When those to whom we have imputed an unfeeling, cold disposition shew towards us one that is quite the contrary, it affects us far more than the sensibility of others.

But it so happened that the old nurse who still lived with us had also nursed Fitzroy Wilton, and from her I now found that he had learned more about our present state than we expected, and that daily through Ada's illness he had come to enquire from her about the child, and I believe about us too.

And now came the time that more experienced persons than myself anticipated.

We were all in my own stately and charming room, watching the great bed whereon the little creature I loved so much was now lying tranquil.

The fever was sinking. I did not know that she was sinking with it.

Those wondrously beautiful eyes were open, and looking upward, as to the ceiling. A smile that seemed not like anything of earth stole over the lovely face—"O! beautiful!" the child

murmured —“flowers — beautiful !—there is a man up there.” She lay smiling some moments.

“What does she see?” asked Basil ; but our mother and the old nurse knelt down in silence beside the bed, and we did so too.

The smile passed away: the light from the eyes grew less bright, and the colour on the burning cheek was fading. But once again while we all knelt there, the smile came back ; the little hand rose up and beckoned something down ; and then the child making an effort to rise, held out both its little arms as if it wanted to be lifted up, and still looking up at the ceiling, said—“Is that Maida ?” and fell back again. I rose to take her in my arms, but it was not me she wanted. The angels had taken her.

The little arms were still outstretched—but they did not clasp my neck.

Our mother’s joined hands fell on her breast, and she said aloud, “Father in Heaven take back thy child—not mine, but thine.”

* * * * *

The first sight of Death ! Is there a living being who has not felt that sight produce sensa-

tions that no other could ? It is one that should be tenderly, wisely presented to young eyes— if it must be presented.

But I did not know it was Death I looked at. Well for me to see it first in such a form. It seemed to me something of Heaven; and I had associated Death with other thoughts.

And what a picture had I drawn to myself at her Baptism ! The white-robed angel was gone indeed, soaring away, but the ‘ fight ’ for which she was signed with the sign of the Cross, was still unfought. The unsullied sign was still bright on her brow.

My young heart’s delight, farewell !—not my deepest love, but yet my greatest joy.—The first break is in our home-chain : the first shaft of the Spoiler has reached us.

* * * * *

And now my chamber was the chamber of Death. That room where the dreams of the young happy girl had been by day and night alike unreal, unlike the waking realities of the world and of common life.

Now the white paper patch on all the furniture

is not the only strange thing there. There is a stranger still—Death. The lovely, blooming, bounding child is there—laid out—lovely still but with the spring of life dried up. Death ! disguise thee as we will thou still art Death, and hast no resemblance but to thyself.

Our mother came and took my hand in hers, and with the other took Basil.

“Two children now again,” he whispered to her.

“No, no, my son—three still,” she replied, “and now I feel her to be more my own than I did before—the whole family in Heaven and Earth are one.”

And so saying she led us to my own room.

Basil paused at the door: he had heard of death; he shrunk from looking at it. But there were none of the gloomy appurtenances, and none of the conventional and ghastly appendages of Death to be seen in my chamber. A row of wax lights burned at the foot of the bed ; but that great bed remained nearly as it had been, save that its blue satin coverlet, in addition to glowing flowers embroidered on it by our fair ancestors, bore a quantity of natural ones lightly showered over it.

A tiny form, strewn over with fresh rose leaves, rested on that stately bed, the long flowing curls of radiant hair gleaming amid the autumn flowers—the rose and the rose bud withering there together—dust to dust.

And our mother knelt, for Death was there, and in the presence of Death she told us dying man should kneel, almost as in the presence of God.

And we looked on the little rose bud face—so full of smiles and light—still lovely, but rigid—the sunbeam of our closing Summer that had vanished into Heaven ere the Winter closed in.

And there, at a later hour, I came back alone. The first night of my life that I was to be absent from that room from the time when, as a child of six years old, I well remembered it was given to me for my ‘very own.’ And now it was bright with lights—but they were not for joy; and my bed was strewn with flowers, but they were not for a festive decoration.

And still the rooks in the wilderness outside it kept making the old bass music I had loved to

hear ; and still the lime branches hung down the same over the walk—and all without was quite the same, and all within was changed.

And a thought, even in that chamber of Death, stole into my mind—If Walter stood there now beneath those limes, looking up to my window, and if he saw me watching by my dead child, would he not say, “Maida, beware ! the home-loves are lessened by one.”

I ought not to have let that thought come in. I went and touched the cold forehead of the sleeper. But the kiss of death is terrible to lips unused to it, and a faintness came over me. Basil came to seek for me and found me cold and faint.

He carried me away, and then he sat with me almost all that night, and we talked of Ada’s baptism, and he said, “The banner of Christ had not been extended for her to fight beneath, but His angel had appeared, and the little one had raised its loving arms, and gone back to its Father with the holy sign undefaced on its mortal brow.”

And once more we went there to take our

"last look." I paused one moment as we left the room, and looked back, slowly and deliberately over it; I looked at every article of furniture; I looked through the window at the lime walk beyond it; I listened to the rooks in noisy convocation not far from it: and I looked at the bed the last; and then I went out and shut the door, and saw the pleasant chamber of my childhood and youth no more.

The servants kept watch, and not they alone, for old fashioned customs had been kept up by us: and the "wake" was observed, but with decent order. The house was open to all comers, and there was the sound of feet coming and going, and of low voices lamenting or talking. But I lay at my mother's side, and pressed the bed coverings on my lips to stifle my sobs.

CHAPTER XXII.

LITTLE Ada was buried in the small and private churchyard which lay within our own grounds, or rather within what once were our grounds. We wished the funeral to be private, and only to have attended it ourselves with the servants: and it was for this end to take place in the evening. But a private funeral was a thing unheard of, considered, I believe, disgraceful. The whole country round, as the people said, would come to it whether we wished it or not.

And so it was. At all events it shewed a degree of sympathy and kind feeling which our proud and wounded minds had not expected.

The first attendance at a funeral is like the

first sight of a death. One becomes familiarised to both : but the first sight of a dead face, and the first sound of those magnificent words, as the white-robed priest precedes the dead, chanting the blessed saying of his Lord, "I am the resurrection and the life,"—and the mourners follow—death and life, sorrow and the hope of joy, blent into one,—moments to be remembered in most lives.

Strange it is that in the British Kingdom, in the so-called religious England, should be seen the disgraceful spectacle of children running to a funeral as to a show ; leaping over the tombs of the dead, and even making the open grave the scene of pastime. How fearful must be the hard irreligion of the heart thus formed in young minds ! Can all the Sunday school instruction in the world eradicate the evil which this unholy licence produces.

Basil had never before been present at a funeral, and he was profoundly touched by it.

Our removal had been postponed for a month in consequence of the child's illness, but the funeral was over when little more than a fortnight

of that time had expired. Still we were to remain the whole time ; and so complete a change had been effected in our feelings by the occurrence of a calamity which touched our affections and not our pride, that our anxiety to be gone was at an end, and we were glad of an interval of repose.

The day after the funeral Basil, who had been lost in thought for some time, looked gravely up and said, " Do you know, Magdalene, that I really begin to think Fitzroy Wilton *has* a heart after all."

At another time I should have laughed, but now I answered as gravely,—“ A short time ago I should have said that if he had a heart he certainly must have no head. But when I found he came to the back door to enquire for our darling, I began to think that both might be better than most persons believed.”

“ He quite surprised me yesterday,” Basil continued, “ he was so unlike himself, and seemed as if he had laid aside all his absurdities.”

“ O ! he has become a really great man now,” I said, “ and he need not live on the reputation of being an Exquisite.”

"You are becoming quite shrewd, sister ; such a possibility occurred to me also. He was so kind yesterday, seeming even respectful in his manner to me, so that I felt there must be more in his mind than we had supposed, for only superior minds treat misfortune and sorrow with respect."

My answer was a sigh. Respect so produced was to me exceedingly painful.

But two or three days afterwards, another circumstance in which Mr. Fitzroy Wilton was concerned occurred to surprise me far more, and to render it doubtful whether, if he had ever had a head, it were still in his possession.

My room had been changed, and the new one appropriated to me was my usual sitting one now, for the simple reason that it had no association with former things, and I thought it was preparing me for a more final change. I avoided the library. The door of this room partly opened one day, and bending very low as if she could see into it better so than by standing upright, our old nurse looked cautiously in.

"I've got something for you, darling."

"Well, give it to me."

"It's into your own beautiful hand I'm to give it."

Her hand was rolled up in her apron : she unfolded it, and produced a letter. It was directed to me, and though very nicely put up I should have thought it a petition for charity, as I was by no means in the habit of getting letters : seeing, however, a great seal with a coat of arms, I said—"A letter from Wilton ! I thought we had quarrelled finally."

The seal was broken, and within the outer cover there was a letter sealed with a crest only. I opened that, and found a smaller letter within, with a small seal bearing initials only. While I was breaking that seal Nurse whispered confidentially—

"The boy that brought it, that's the man that is his own valley dee sham, was sent with all speed, he was to ride for the bare life, my jewel, and not to go back without bringing the answer. So now you'll read that, and I'll come back, and take him word what you say."

Nurse went away, and caring little about what

we called her 'old talk,' I opened the third enclosure.

The first words I read were these—

"If in addressing Miss St. Pierre I were to use the language of the world's vocabulary I should not be understood by her."—

"What on earth is all this!" I said to myself, and hastily turning to the signature I saw the name of Fitzroy Wilton. So the letter was not from the youth I spitefully called Master Augustus.

I did not preserve that letter, and I only recollect its commencement. But its purport was to offer me the hand for life which I had too eagerly accepted at my first and only ball. I had always laughed both at the letters and declarations of his brother, but this letter was seriously written, and even if I were disposed to my former levity, it must have been seriously felt. The writer was ten years older than myself, a man of fortune now, and therefore of consideration in the country. This I did not think of, but what touched me most was that his letter concluded with an assurance that I

should not be separated from the family to whom I was so much endeared, and that my mother should consider she only received another son without losing her daughter.

When I read those words I put down the letter, and put my hands to my face and wept. This was my first proposal—I never considered all that had passed with Walter Greville in that light. This I felt like a matter of business. An answer was to be sent ; and nothing appeared easier than to write and send it, for the servant waited for it.

I took a sheet of paper and placed it before me, and wrote Dear Sir, but there the letter came to a stop. Then like Rose Bradwardine I thought I ought to omit the dear, and I began another with a plain Sir ; and when I found I got no further on this sheet of paper either, I began to recollect that letters in novels had no beginnings, and I saw that Fitzroy had adopted that style ; so I placed another sheet before me, resolved this should have no beginning either ; and this indeed proved the case, for when old Nurse came peeping in saying “ Is it ready, mavourneen ? ” there

was the sheet of paper, and the letter was unbegun.

"I can't write, Nurse, I don't know what to say."

"Go and ask the mistress, my pet, or wait till I call her here."

"Not for the world, Nurse. O! Nurse, I am so sorry—did she know I got this letter?"

"Sure there's no wonder in that, and you that used to get letters from Master Augustus almost every day—only you see I was bid to give that letter into your own hand and not to let on about it."

"I see," I said aloud, though speaking to myself; "he says he wishes my answer to be *my own*. He is quite mistaken if he thinks mama would like me to—How can he take such an idea into his head? I will not marry any one ever. How could he think of it? To think of my being married!"

"And it's strange too, and you a child in my arms the other day. Well, mavourneen, is the answer ready?" was the speech of Nurse, who knew perhaps more of all this than myself.

"Yes, quite ready; only I can't put it on paper."

"Then may be you'll just say it to himself?"

"Yes; that would be easier; or will you say it for me, Nurse?"

"Troth, then, and I will do that same my own heart's child," and off she went full speed.

My head ached severely; I was unaccustomed to compose letters, and rejoiced to get out of this fresh trouble. Fitzroy Wilton was also her foster son; and that tie produced great intimacy.

In a surprising short time old Nurse showed her head at the door of the room where I was sitting with Basil.

"There's one that wants you, darling."

"Is it a beggar?" I asked, going to the door.

"Well he's in the imitation of one;" and when I had got out of the room, she added, "It's himself that's in it."

Now "himself" in Irish speech implies either a favoured lover or husband.

"Did you give Mr Fitzroy my message?"

"Then do you think I didn't?"

"Did you tell him I could not marry him, Nurse; did you say that I was not thinking of being married at all, as I said to you?"

"That you wouldn't marry him?" said Nurse staring—"that you wouldn't take the great heir, is it? and he as good as gold, and as handsome!—O! yes, I said it to be sure"—she added, interrupting herself, and nodding her head knowingly. "May be you'll be after saying it to himself too? Sure it's dying for the love of you the poor boy has been since you were the height of my knee, only Master Augustus indeed must put up to you, and poor Master Walter too that's gone over the seas, and will never see you more."

"Stop, Nurse. Of course you talk as you like to us;—but I do not wish you to speak as you do now. Tell me what you want with me?"

"Not a one of me wants you, dear," she answered with some offence, "but himself in there."

"What! Mr. Fitzroy Wilton?"

"Yes, indeed, then; it's himself that's in it."

I smoothed down my hair with both hands, looked at my pale face in the glass, and then went to the room where he was. He sprang quickly forward to meet me, and then stopped.

I felt quite sure that our Nurse had given him a very different message from what I intended; so I said at once,

"I am so sorry, Mr. Fitzroy, that I could not write an answer to your kind letter, but I never have written letters, and I am sure Nurse mistook—"

"You are so pale—you look so unlike yourself—perhaps I was wrong at such a time—but you were going away and no one could tell where to. Now, then, I will not press for your answer, for your eyes make me fear—"

"O yes! let me tell you now. I meant to say I am very, very sorry if you really wish me to marry you,—for I cannot do so."

"Then you are engaged to Walter Greville?"

I felt the colour rush over my face, and I believe my eyes lost the stony look they had had.

"I do not know if I am engaged to him or not," I said with anger; "but that could not affect the answer I was to give to your letter."

"I comprehend," he returned in a tone of pique; "under any circumstances Miss St. Pierre would not be so disposed to favour me on a greater occasion as she was on a less."

"Ah!" I said, understanding his allusion to

my eager acceptance of his hand as a partner,
" Ah! I have grown wiser since then!"

It was long afterwards that I became conscious of my blunder.

Mr. Fitzroy could not forbear a smile.

" Yet you are still only like yourself," he said, " still unlike any young lady I know, or perhaps ever shall know."

" That is not my fault," I answered with displeasure, " I was not educated like other young ladies."

" Do you imagine I mean what I say as a reproach?"

" Certainly."

" You can hardly think so when I add that you are the only one I ever saw whom I could wish to be my wife."

I believe such a speech as that must be gratifying to any woman by whomsoever it be made. I felt gratified, perhaps a little proud; but I answered, " I hope you will get a much better one, Mr. Fitzroy; as for me, I do not think of being any one's wife."

" If that is really the case, do not decide now; wait for a year."

“No, indeed ; what I tell you now I should tell you then, if I were alive.”

“But may not family considerations—” he resumed.

A great pain shot to my heart—“We are poor now,” I said, “and our mother”—

“Do not be offended,” he interposed.

“No, I will not be offended. I felt the kindness that dictated your offer respecting our mother. But Mr. Fitzroy, ignorant as I am, and little as I know of life, or of what is called the world, I cannot help thinking that it is scarcely fair, scarcely honest, to marry in order to benefit one’s relations. Is it not a sort of cheat ? Ought one to marry in order to provide a home even for a mother ? ”

“No,” said Mr. Fitzroy. “In this as in all else, your heart is still true and pure.”

“Then now we may part,” I said, giving him my hand. “If it ever should be necessary, I can work for my mother—I can beg for her,—but I cannot marry for her.”

I may end our discourse at this passage ; I repeated it so far only to bring in this speech, because the opinion I thus expressed, was one

that was often recalled to my mind in after years, when I saw the moral of some popular novel turn on the self-sacrifice of a heroine who marries a worthy man and devoted lover, in order to relieve her distressed, and perhaps not too amiable, parent, while her heart is given to another object.

A compact was made between Mr. Fitzroy and myself that the affair should be a secret. I was too glad to promise this, and I begged him to do so too. To which he replied that a man was seldom anxious to proclaim the fact of his being refused.

And perhaps even his old foster-mother never understood a fact that might, indeed, even if plainly made known, have been incomprehensible to her mind. And so we left her enjoying, in distant perspective, the union of her "beautiful pet," with the young nabob she had the pride to call her foster-son.

And little Ada lay buried in the small graveyard, within what had been our demesne; and there, the day before we left the country, Basil and I planted two very young trees—seedlings from the wood.

“If ever we return here, sister, we shall see if they grow together,” he said, “and perhaps some one seeing them here may remember us.”

And now a last look at “the dear old place;” such a look as Walter Greville had taken of it; yet with feelings he could not know, for it had been our own—our lost inheritance—our world beyond which all to us seemed desert.

And from the top of the same hill we looked back, and saw the stately antique mansion that had been our home, stand begirt with its noble trees in golden and brown richness; behind it our dear wood stretched wide and deep; before it, hidden in trees, was the piece of water where the skating had gone on; at one side flowed the river where our boat used to sail—the river that flowed on and ever on, while generation came and went. Why do we associate sameness and perpetuity with our thoughts of a river? Not a drop of its ever-flowing water is the same; it is a constant, ceaseless succession of change.

And now we are gone. The place that knew us shall know us no more.

Here I will leave a short blank in my story and return to fill it up.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN one of the least fashionable and least agreeable of the suburbs of Dublin, there was, and I suppose still is, a dull and dingy house, standing in a sort of lane which a piece of board at the corner styled "Acacia Place," from a half demolished tree that dragged on a languishing existence at its further extremity. The house externally presented a wall of greyish coloured brick, pierced for windows at each side of the door, and facing another wall of similar brick that had no windows. Inside the front door you found yourself in a square space of about a yard and a half in dimension, and rising from this was a short flight of stairs, on the first landing of which

there is a glass door veiled with a thick white curtain, through which, however, you clearly see the light burning within the room into which the glass door opens.

That room is long and narrow, more like a conservatory than a bed room. The walls are coloured a light green ; there are five windows, three at one side and two at the other. There are no curtains nor blinds, for the room runs back from the rest of the house into a garden. Between the two windows and opposite to the three, there is a bed, with a chair at each side ; and opposite to the foot of the bed there is a high toilet table, fenced round with pink calico and stiff muslin. On the foot of this bed a young girl is seated holding a long board, covered with green baize, on her knees, the other end of which rests on the high toilet table, thus forming a desk before her on which she is busily writing. There is a pile of written paper on the board before her, and a quantity of unwritten paper on the bed behind her : but one sheet bearing the words Dear Sir at the top, is always close at hand, to be pulled over that on which she is

writing, in case of disturbance. Eleven at night sounds, and she has sat thus with short interruptions from five in the morning. Yet there is no look of weariness on her face, none apparently in her flying fingers. Her cheeks are rather brighter than usual, and when she looks up the brown eyes gleam with light. There is no look of thought upon the brow ; no racking of the brain is expressed there. The exuberance of a young, untrained imagination has found a vent, and flows forth in the rapid movement of the light, unwearied hand.

The wild vine of the sunny south is more prolific, if less valuable, than the cultured and pruned one of the northern hot-house.

A light is coming up the stairs outside ; there is a tap of a finger on the glass door, and the customary nightly words, "Go to bed, child." But this time the door is unexpectedly thrown open, and a pale soft face looks in.

The girl grasps the sheet of paper, headed "Dear Sir," but with a sudden start springs from her seat, forgetful of the consequence.

The green board falls down ; and with it go the papers and the inkstand

The pale face at the door gazes with looks of pity and self condemnation ; yet pretends not to see what the girl would fain conceal ; and she, "silly little thing"—treads over the paper and crushes the spilled ink deeper into them. Like the ostrich, she has hidden her head in a bush and fancied she was not seen.

And the pale face looks on—in silence—but in silence how full of tenderness and sympathy.

Ah ! in how many after days and nights of toil, in how many hours of weariness alike to head and hand and heart, was that look of love to meet the aching eyes that saw it in vision only ! —was that pale sweet face that beamed encouragement in its silent pity, to look again from the spirit-land upon the writer, and the voice to be heard as from the land of dreams, that then actually said, "It is late, Magdalene. Go to bed, child ; you will destroy your eyes and complexion."

"I was just going, mama."

"Good night, my love."

"Good night, mama."

Not to bed yet ! not to bed yet ! though the glass door is again closed. There is plenty of work to be done.

What a piece of work to repair the damage done by the fall of the ink! One, two, three o'clock struck before it was repaired.

Then the mischief was set right, and no time had been lost, for midnight was the regular time for rest. From midnight till four o'clock for sleep, and then to rise, take a cold shower bath, and set to work again; such was the daily life now of Magdalene St Pierre, "the Queen of the Fairies," "the silly little thing."

The night I speak of it was useless to go to bed, for at six my brother would as usual call me to walk out with him. It was now summer time.

I lay down dressed, and fell asleep; and from a sleep sound as a child's I started at the first sound of his voice.

"Yes, Basil, yes, I am ready." And, losing my shower bath, we set out down the shady lane, the only tolerable walk within reach. Basil is studying French, which he had until now neglected; he has a grammar with him and consults me as we walk along.

Let the twins walk on, studying as they go,

while the writer turns back to glance over the six months that have passed since the last look of their home was taken.

The villa residence was what, I suppose, would in still older time have been called a citizen's box ; to us, at least it appeared so small that we were afraid of moving quickly in the rooms lest we should dash against the walls.

But the house that appeared to us so poor, so mean, which we never left for fear we should be recognized as its tenants, very, very soon became too great for us.

The calculations Basil had helped our mother to make regarding the possibility of living on £800 a year, proved to have been as unnecessarily as they were painfully made. There was soon no £800 a year to try to live upon.

And before the "three months certain" for which the villa residence had been taken, and of which one had elapsed before we entered it, were quite expired, we were all three—not calculating—calculation was here impossible—but trying to believe that we actually must con-

trive, in some way to live on less than a fourth of that yearly sum.

It was a truth. The last and least of our father's estates had followed the rest: and all that the famous Court of Chancery, the Irish lawyers, the only thriving race of their land, and some creditors, left to the already widowed wife and children, was what they could not take—namely, a life income of about a hundred and eighty pounds a year, settled upon the former.

The villa residence was left for one still meaner.—O! so mean!—it would almost have broken my heart if we had been forced to call it ours; but we only occupied it on the mutual accommodation system; for an old lady who had used it for a boarding-school, found it 'larger than she required' when her school was given up, and so we had the greater part of it ready furnished on the terms we could afford to pay.

We thought we had come down to the lowest when the first crash came; and it is surprising when the first steps were taken in the descent of life, with how little additional pain we went down the rest.

And yet there was one, one source of pain—one sense of true degradation, which to the pure innocent mind,—the proud, delicate heart of a girl, brought up in the most entire seclusion from the world, or from common life, exceeded in intensity all that had gone before it.

The world seems altogether changed since that time; perhaps no part of it is more changed than the kingdom of England. Civilized life has become quite another thing. The novels of Miss Burney, cleverly descriptive as they were of the manners of her day, are, as such, scarcely comprehensible now. Such insults as poor Evelina was continually subject to are very easily avoided by young women now.

The time of which I write was midway between hers and this time present; and whatever improvement has naturally taken place in morals and in manners, the change was not yet so decided as to permit a young girl to walk alone upon a public road with impunity.

It never occurred to me that the white muslin robe and round small straw hat with its plain

blue ribbon which I wore at our own country place, were remarkable, when I left such a dwelling as we now occupied, and went to execute a commission for our mother. Out of an establishment whose very names were unknown to me, their number was so large, we had now one sole domestic, who bore that of Peggy; and to walk out with Peggy was more remarkable than to walk alone.

The rude stare—the impertinent remark—how strangely unintelligible to me were they at first ! But when I found myself followed to the door of our humble dwelling, when I saw those who presumed to do so, daily walking before it, when I felt my steps were watched—O ! what a hideous glimpse I had of the world I had insisted on thinking so good as well as so happy !

And these idle and presumptuous beings fancied they acted like gentlemen, while casting aside their right to the name of man.

Then with cheeks well nigh scorched with the flush of mingled pride and shame, with eyes flashing indignation, the poor Fairy Queen of other days would rush up to her green room,

cast her face down on the side of its gaunt bed, and shed there the tears of anguish which were shed in secret only.

And, when the storm was over, in the depths of her heart a cry might be heard—"Walter! Walter!"

Poor girl! now, looking back on her as on one that is no longer a part of myself, I feel for, and pity her. She was to be pitied, for she kept her trials to herself.

I did not think then that any consideration could induce me to hint at the nature of these trials to any one—not to our mother, or to my second self, my twin brother. The down on the butterfly's wing is lightly rubbed off; the down on the young innocent mind is as soft; but dreadfully painful is the touch that first assails it.

Not one word even to mother or brother could I say, but often would I think of Walter Greville. Ah! could he see his regal lady now! Then I shrank from the idea of Walter's eye flashing in its deepest emotion; of Walter's strong arm, and calm manly spirit.

For not for worlds would I wish him to see me in my fallen estate : not even to free me from this misery would I lessen the distance that was between us.

I had never set my foot on a public road, much less in the street of a town, till now ; and it was perhaps natural that curiosity should be raised about us. We did not think how unlike we were to other people. And all this time Basil was busy in the Old World. He was deep in classics ; and he had got a pupil, a boy two years younger than himself. The dream of his own boyhood was not yet over, and what he earned by his pupil he paid to the tutor who read with him for college.

Thus it was in our early morning walk we chiefly were together : it was seldom he could walk out with me at another time, and our mother had scarcely ever walked in her life. I doubt if she could have walked on the road I had to walk on, or that she knew in the least what it was like.

And one bright morn, as Basil walked with me through the green lane, to which the memory of one of us was to turn throughout long after

years, he looked depressed, as he often did then, and spoke mournfully of the broken dreams of our youth. I was beginning myself to feel disgusted, sickened, weary, of what I saw of life, and thought what I saw was a specimen of what it was in reality. We were indeed placed suddenly in a hard school, yet we were not learning wisely or well.

Our spirits were yet young, and far from being broken; my own at times were as high as ever; at others my heart-misery was felt, but I hid it; I often tried to cover it as they cover the face of the dead, when flowers and light are only to be seen.

So when Basil as usual uttered my own thoughts, I answered his melancholy with mirth. He smiled, and with a smile that began to be sadder than his sigh, he said—

“Extinct is the animal fire,
And the bard in my bosom is dead;
What I love I now merely admire
And my heart is as grey as my head.”

“Now that is all false sentiment, brother, one’s heart need never be grey, even when one’s

head is. And as to yours, if your heart is the colour of your hair it must be a very black one."

"Dear Magda be serious, I want to speak to you."

"Well, speak ; for I am so."

"I think I must be a clerk in an office, if I can get a place, sister."

"A clerk ! What, one of those persons we see about four o'clock with a gold chain and a ring, and"—

"Stop, dear : you would not like to talk so if your brother were one. No, sister ; a mind superior to yours or mine may be chained to a desk for life."

"To mine, perhaps, but not—" I was going to say "to his ;" but he interrupted with unusual irritation.

"It is useless to talk thus, sister ; I must do something. I have no prospect before me—all is gone. I must try for some situation, unless I can do what I should prefer for myself."

"To go to Oxford ?"

"That is hopeless : no ; but to go abroad as a missionary, I need not enter Oxford for that."

‘A Missionary! Abroad! to the Heathen, Basil?’

“Yes.”

“And where?”

“In India. I owe the idea to Walter Greville; he often spoke to me of the state of the Heathen, though he only knew it by report. He was then looking forward to a military life there, and I was aspiring to one more glorious at home. He often said if I were not a son and heir he would urge me to go with him. Now one of these titles no longer belongs to me: and I feel, Magda, that if, while it did belong to me I had devoted myself, like the great men we read of in the old time, to some great and good work that demanded self-sacrifice, I might have had some merit; but now” —

That *now* was uttered with a despondency of tone that entered my very heart.

“And is not all that ambition, brother? It appears very beautiful to go and do all that Xavier and such men have done, and yet who can tell if greater sacrifices of self may not be made at home.”

"You sigh now, Magdalene."

"I often do so without thinking: but Basil, remember if you are no longer an heir you are still a son."

"And a brother, dearest."

"O! Basil, Basil, do not be a Missionary!"

My brother looked down at the face that was bent over his arm; and then he said decisively,—

"No, sister: from this moment I resign the thought. You know how long I have looked forward to a clerical life as that of my choice, even when it was by no means expected that I should enter on any profession. I believe I only thought of the missionary life as a substitute for the other at home."

"You shall still enter on the other, Basil."

"How is it possible, Magdalene?"

"I do not know; but *wait*."

"For what?"

"I cannot tell. I feel, I know, that something will occur to help you, if you will only wait."

Why, as my twin-brother asked, did I say that word "wait?" I did not know; I could

not tell him what he was to wait for, because I had no idea myself.

Walter Greville once told a young careless girl to follow the inspirations of her own heart. Basil asked me, smiling, if these words were an inspiration: and perhaps they were. A still wiser man than Walter desired me to do the same thing—our tutor.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE links of our human life-chain are not put together at random ; the art that unites them so imperceptibly, is best seen at a distance.

To what a very trifling accident do I owe the circumstance that determined the whole character of my life ! Yet it was by no means perceived at first that anything grew out of that accident : one link was to be joined on to another as it were at random ; but looking back when the chain is nearly complete, one can see how each was fitted to meet its successor.

One day, heart-sick, indignant, and burning with shame and anger, I was looking round for any place into which I might turn for refuge from

that gross impertinence which under pretence of admiration so often assailed me.

There was a small arched door-way picturesquely covered up in ivy, out of which that buzz of children's voices which indicates a school was clearly, but not loudly heard.

I hastily turned within it ; and now, after long years have passed, I see the scene more plainly that I then beheld than I did when, with tingling cheeks and flashing eyes, I first sprang hastily in at that ivy-arched door.

A woman, middle aged, short and slight, with a great pair of silver spectacles on her nose, a pair of what we called Wellington boots on her feet, and a white handkerchief put cravat-wise round her neck, a book in one hand, and a long supple rod in the other, stood at the side of the room before a semi-circle of great boys—wild Irish boys, with their hands behind their backs, and their eyes brimful of repressed fun and mischief. Something had occurred that was evidently under trial, for a delinquent was placed in the centre of the half circle, and, after examination, this great sturdy lad was found guilty of wilful falsehood.

The silver spectacles turned this way and that as if in search of some means of chastisement, for the boy seemed to be more than a match for the rod, and at last, with a sudden thought, the wearer put her hand in a tremendously long pocket.

"He has told a lie," she said, quietly. "Now then, sir, let me see your tongue. The boy thinking perhaps it was good fun to exhibit the offending tongue, which was after all just like any other, put it full length out of his mouth; and she holding a little three cornered paper in her hand covered it over with red pepper!

For the moral of the punishment I do not speak, but the moment was opportune for my abrupt and disturbed entrance, and I do not think it likely that the offender soon forgot the literal experience he had of the Apostle's saying, that the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.

The silver spectacles then turned round towards the intruder, and bowing, as both ladies and gentlemen do now, but as neither did then—an old-fashioned, gentlemanlike bow it was—she came forward with repressed and silent laughter,

bowing and bowing, till she reached where I stood, awkwardly enough, not knowing how to account for being there.

"Miss St. Pierre, I believe ; glad to have the honour of seeing you here."

"How do you know me?" I asked immediately.

"I have seen you often walk by here, and I was sure some day you would come to see us, and help us too."

"To help you—to do what?" and with a look of fear my eye glanced to the boy, whose howls and cries were only stifled by fear and the violent effort to clear the guilty tongue.

"O! don't be afraid! I do all the punishment myself. But I'd be glad to get help in the teaching. Indeed now I would."

"And do you teach these great boys and girls yourself? There must be more than fifty."

"I have forty boys and fifty girls on the book, and I have taught them now for nearly three years. I wish you would come and help us, Miss St. Pierre ; it would be doing a good work ; indeed now it would."

"A good work!" I repeated to myself; and the wish stole into my heart to do a good work.

"I am not fit for that," I said aloud, and with a sigh.

"If you *wish* it you are fit for it," was the answer.

"You must be paid well for it—I hope you are."

"Paid! my dear,—I only wish the people would give us a little money to pay our rent and buy our books. You see this is a Methodist Chapel; a pretty little place, isn't it. But we belong to the Church."

"All these children?"—

"No, they are Romanists and Protestants I believe of all sorts, but I myself—your humble servant, am a churchist."

"O! then you are the 'we' you always speak of."

A laugh followed.

"Indeed then I am. But you see I have got the mother of two of the elder girls, whom I am training for teachers, to come and help us in the afternoons; because I have got private pupils of my own. I go to teach writing,

arithmetic, and latin in a family that live four miles from here, in the afternoons, and I live with my mama whose house is a good distance from this ; and now I have an offer of a morning pupil twice a week ; so you see if I can't get some good Christian to help us with the boys I must try and raise a subscription to pay a master for taking my place on these mornings. And they won't get on half so well with him, as they would with a lady like Miss St. Pierre ; indeed now they won't : they wouldn't be one bit afraid of him."

" And you think they would be afraid of me ? O dear !"

" To be sure I do. Isn't there Irish blood in them ?" and a hearty laugh followed. But turning quickly to a desk she took up a copy-book.

" Look at that writing now :—they are a careless, brainless set of dunces," she added, shaking the rod at the writers, " but you see it may be possible to teach them if they will learn."

I looked at the excellent writing with surprise, and at the teacher with admiration

As yet national schools in Ireland were not, and as yet the rage of controversy was only beginning. We had sometimes looked into the schools held in the Roman Catholic Chapels, where a certain proportion of latin was taught to boys who could neither read, spell, nor write in the English tongue, and a master in one of them frankly assured Basil, on one occasion, that he was as good a latitudinarian as himself.

"And is this a Protestant school?" I asked.

"Well I suppose it is, but neither Priest nor Parson help nor hinder us. We read the Bible daily: but we do not use it for a lesson book. The children are nearly all Roman Catholics."

"A lesson book! surely not."

"Don't you know that is done now, Miss St. Pierre?"

"No; I scarcely know anything. I have lived in the country all my life."

"Well people are learning very fast in these days. Long as your life has been, my dear, you may yet learn a good deal before it has been much longer:—will you help us Miss St Pierre?"

"I should be glad to help you: I will if I

can. I think I might teach the girls to sew."

A laugh again. "Thank you, dear, that is more than I could do. But you must teach the boys for me. You will manage them better than any one; and I have no notion of young ladies like Miss St Pierre hiding their talent in a napkin."

"Indeed, boys will never obey me," I said, and then I blushed as if I spoke an untruth, for a thought of former times crossed me, and I felt afraid of the red pepper experiment being repeated; so I hastily added something about not having any talents to hide.

The teacher took off the silver spectacles, and looked at me without them, and then advancing one Wellington boot, and lowering her voice as she bent forward, she said confidentially—

"Take my word for it, Miss St. Pierre, you have talents which others may find out before you do so yourself."

"How do you come to know me?" I asked again.

The other Wellington was drawn up to its fellow, and touching my forehead with her wand,

she said, "I know nothing in the world of you but what that forehead and eyes tell me. And now you are feeling in your heart that I am not wrong. So mind my words, and use the talents God has given you."

The only way in which I could use my talents, whatever they were, was in trying to make other great boys obey me as I formerly got Walter and Wilton to do. And so I went daily to the school for that purpose; and really it was surprising how well I got on, with thirty or forty of them left all to my own management, when the silver spectacles and Wellington boots were not present.

But it was not alone the discovery of my talents that pleased me; it was a sense, for the first time, of being well employed, of being of use, of doing good. I felt now the solace that occupation can bring to mental suffering, to that mental lassitude which in itself is pain. I was growing happier: the head that had hung down as a bulrush, began to be almost as erect as it used to be when I walked our domains in the consciousness that every one knew, that every one respected the child of their owner.

It is true my tormentors often followed me to that school house door; but I did not feel so worried, nor so intensely mortified, and I felt sure that if they entered it, they would go away ashamed of their idleness when they saw my employment.

It happened one day that some of them did so just as I had got behind a circle of boys at the lower end of the room, or chapel.

The spectacles had noticed them before, and the Wellington boots forthwith advanced to meet them. Their wearer, with her little cravat, her cropped, and naturally wiry hair, and her rod in her hand, wishing to look as gentlemanlike as possible, went forward bowing and bowing, and twitching the rod as if longing to exercise its powers.

What passed I could not hear, but I saw the tables were turned, and my tormentors were being tormented. The comical laugh to which the two overlapping front teeth gave a still more comical expression, reached to me though the words did not, and whatever was its cause, the laugh was all on her side. She stood between them and the door, to which they appeared try-

ing to make their way, until at last, holding it open with one hand, and with the other, switching the air with her rod, she either allowed, or commanded, them to pass through it.

Then the little woman came down the aisle between the rows of boys and girls, the front teeth laughing between the parted lips, that were moving as if repeating some pleasant speeches to herself.

She stood before me, and I knew that she expected me to say something, but I felt so ashamed that I turned away my head, and said confusedly,

“What can those people want?”

The teeth laughed outright.

“Indeed, then, my dear, it seems that is just like the question of your talents—I think others know more about it than you do; indeed, now, I do. But do you know, Miss St. Pierre, I would dearly like to give those lads a whipping—upon my word I would.” And the rod began to exercise itself upon the air. “If you’ll believe me now, I’d like to have done it. Those lads want to go to school again. Indeed now I

wish they'd come to me." And the rod cut the air smartly.

"I am sure I cannot imagine why they behave so strangely," I said.

"I am very sure you cannot, my dear, and I'll tell you why; Miss St. Pierre has always lived in

"Some sweet little isle of her own,
In a blue summer's ocean far off and alone."

And a quite different wave of the rod up above her head, plainly indicated that the blue summer's ocean was the realm of fairy land—the land of fancy or imagination.

"Indeed now you have, and you don't know half or quarter or the twentieth part as much of this world of ours, as the least of the children there that haven't read a thousandth part as much of books as you have."

I felt inexpressibly hurt at this, for I took it as a reproach. I suppose she saw I was hurt, for she added very gravely,

"Perhaps, my dear, before twenty years have gone over your head, you will feel that it is no reproof to a young girl to say she knows little of

the ways of the world. But one thing I'll explain to you, dear. You ask why it is those would-be gentlemen behave in such a manner. I can tell you the cause of it—idleness. Indeed it is now—poor, simple creatures—nothing in the world else. Your mother, Miss St. Pierre, is a nice Englishwoman, and perhaps she cannot teach you much of the fashions of our country. But you see a gentleman here must be brought up to do nothing; and so you see every one fancies that by being idle he becomes a gentleman. Now you see if those lads would only come to school to me—as I told them I thought they meant to do when they came in here—why I'd teach them the difference, that's all." And the rod switched the air till it sounded again, as the Wellington boots moved off with one low laugh and earnest lash.

Such a personage as this, take her all in all, it never was my lot to meet again. Such persons present themselves more and more freshly to memory the farther we move away in time and distance from them. But the link which she and her school formed was no inconsiderable one in the life-chain that was framing for me.

Among her many curiosities was that of her being no admirer of the 'Sunday school system,' which was then—although we as yet knew nothing about it—become so fashionable.

She imagined that taking the responsibility off parents of seeing their children go to church, or of going with them, was a bad thing, and that it would be better if parents partook of the duties of the children on that day, and that the children were allowed a portion of the parents' enjoyments.

She had, however, her children to meet her at the school for an hour on Sunday afternoons, and then she generally found out how they and their parents had passed the morning.

On these afternoons another pair of Wellington boots were seen in the school, for a rather elderly gentleman—I considered him an old one—came generally to examine the children in the Bible.

One winter day, when I had had a long walk from church in torrents of rain, I took it into my head that the old gentleman would not venture out in such weather, and that I must go to

the school, as undoubtedly no one else could do so.

One of the girls put a Bible into my hand, and they read a beautiful passage from it and stood silent, expecting me to ask questions. That I could not do, and so closing the book, I began to speak to them, and very soon I found what I was saying ran from illustration, almost into narrative.

The children had been in earnest attention ; but seeing their eyes turn from time to time, mine did so likewise ; and I saw the elderly gentleman, holding his hat in both hands, and standing, with his ear turned to me, close behind the girls.

I rose instantly to give up my place, saying I really did not know how to fill it.

"People never know what they can do till they try," he answered drily "and that reminds me to ask you, Miss St. Pierre, to try to do something else :—it is to write a tract for me. The Tract Society of London have asked me for one and I cannot write it. I wish you would."

"Do what sir?"

"Write a tract."

"A tract—what is a tract?"

"O! you don't know what it is! why it is a sort of little book, either a story or some religious writing."

"O! one of those little printed sheets of paper that the penny-a-week ladies carry about."

"The penny-a-week ladies, ma'am?"

"Pardon me—it is the name our servant, who is a country girl, gives them—I mean persons who go about for subscriptions, or collecting money. But how do you mean that I should write a tract?"

"Why, I mean that you should first think over your own thoughts, and then get some paper, and a pen and ink, and write down the thoughts, instead of speaking them."

"How very droll that would be!" I cried, laughing. "And would that be a tract?—something that the—that people might give away meaning to do good."

"Provided the thoughts were good, it might do good," he answered with a gravity that made me blush for my lightness.

"Well, but indeed, even when I have had thoughts, thoughts I was anxious to express, I could not express them in writing," I replied, thinking as I spoke of my attempted letter to Mr. Fitzroy Wilton.

"Probably, because anxiety defeated its own object," he observed; "but pray, young lady, have you never written to an absent friend?"

"O! to Walt"—I stopped with a burning blush, remembering I was speaking to almost a stranger, but as I recollected the ease and rapidity with which page after page could be indited to Walter when he was in England, I was silent as to the impossibility of putting my thoughts on paper.

"Now, then," this grave man continued, "fancy you are writing to this absent friend, but take some good subject to relate to him or her. Get hold of it in your mind, and tell it as well and as quickly as you can."

"And when it is told"—I was going to ask should I send it to the absent friend, but I knew I would not do that, so I concluded with the question—"What is to be done with it then?"

"Printed, and published."

I laughed outright and heartily.

"You *can* write Miss St. Pierre, and you *will* write," said this singular seer, looking half displeased at my scepticism. "I know you can, and so do what I ask; write this tract; women always do such things better than men. See what pretty little things Mrs. Sherwood has written.

I walked home thinking to myself how it came to pass that he and some persons pretended to know more about me than I knew of myself. But of his tract I thought no more.

We had suffered much, my twin brother and myself, in mind, but as yet neither of us had known what real illness was. When very little babies we had been laid up side by side with some of those diseases which children are heirs to, and we had an idea that one could not be ill while the other continued well. Now, however, we were to learn the reverse.

When I got back from the school my purple cloth pelisse was saturated with rain, and the deep fur with which it was trimmed had got wet

on my way thither ; I had stood at the stove to dry until I was too hot to venture with safety in the air again, and then had walked back under the same cold rain.

The next day I had a cold ; and the next a fever. It went on, and grew worse, and became at last a wild, wild illness, such as I had never known before, and such as I never altogether knew again.

It was not quite a delirium ; for I knew that Basil held me in his arms gently and tenderly ; I knew our mother watched day and night beside me ; and that the poor school children came bringing me what little flowers they could find, or offering any little service they could render. But together with this knowledge there was a strange wild longing, that was mingled with a dread of yielding to it, to pass straight through the three open windows that seemed to glare terribly upon me in that bright green room. Strange thoughts, wild images, unreal fantasies, mixed themselves up with actual things.

Sometimes there would come a pleasant dream-like time, and sometimes a season of horror.

At both times I would always believe myself to be either in or on water. At one, walking away over the calm sea, and out on the far-away and wide wide ocean. There was some one coming from the other side to meet me! It was my brother, and we were both walking on as upon glass, and just meeting, and all at once the water parts, and there is a great gulf and I am sinking, rising, grasping for help,—and filling my hands with water.

Then again I am on the ocean and meeting Walter Greville, but every step I take goes down in the same spot: I am walking, walking, walking, but never advancing: and each time my foot is lifted it sinks down again so deep, and it is such toil, such excessive pain, to get on.

Then the person I was meeting has passed me by, and I am floundering on alone on the deep rough sea, with outstretched hands, trying to say something I cannot say, catching at something I cannot grasp—and the sea behind me is all smooth, and Walter is walking on it quite the other way from me, yet I cannot turn

back—and on, on, on I go ; until I become at last partly sensible that my arms are tightly clasped round my twin brother's neck, and that he suffers me to hold him in a miserable position while our mother, with an anxious and sorrowful face, is cooling my burning head, not with salt sea water but with vinegar.

It was a lengthened night-mare ; a protracted dream of wildness and dread. And finally the fever spent itself, but not the young, strong constitution of its subject ; and pale, weak, bowed down like the storm-beaten flower, I was carried about in my brother's arms, as our darling Ada might have been.

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